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THE  
GREATEST HEIRESS IN ENGLAND.

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VOL. II.



# THE GREATEST HEIRESS IN ENGLAND.

BY

MRS. OLIPHANT

AUTHOR OF

"*The Chronicles of Carlingford,*"  
&c., &c.

"A lady richly left . . . .  
An unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised :  
Happy in this, she is not yet so old  
But she may learn."—*Merchant of Venice.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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## THE GREATEST HEIRESS IN ENGLAND.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE READING OF THE WILL.

LITTLE Jock Trevor had never been a favourite with his father; there had been between them nothing of the caressing intercourse which generally exists between a very old father and a young child. He was not the pet or plaything of the old man, who had remorselessly sentenced him to as complete a separation as was possible from his sister. But, nevertheless, Jock had grown up literally at his father's feet, and the world became suddenly very vacant and strange to him when the familiar figure

was withdrawn. The little fellow did not understand life without this central point of stability and power in it; he had been used to the old man's presence, to the half-comprehended talks which went on over his head, and to the background of that mysterious aged life filled with so many things beyond Jock's understanding, which yet afforded depth and fulness to his strange perceptions of the mysterious world. He and his books had lain in the foreground in a varying atmosphere of visions, but behind had always been that pervading consciousness of something more important, a dimly apprehended world of fact. So it happened that of all the household at the Terrace, it was little Jock who felt his father's death the most deeply; his nerves had suffered from contact with that still more mysterious dying, which he could not understand. He could not get out of his childish mind the impression made upon him by the sudden opening, in the dreadful silence, of his father's eyes. He who had spent all his life alone, could be left alone no longer; he followed

Lucy about wherever she went, holding tightly by her hand. There was no one to interfere, or to prevent the hitherto neglected child from becoming the chief interest of the house. He felt the loss far more, though it was to his immediate advantage, than Lucy did, who cried a little when she woke every morning at the recollection, but put on her crape with a certain melancholy pleasure in the completeness and “depth” of her mourning. Mrs. Ford, though she cried too, could not but admire and wonder at these black dresses covered with crape, which she felt it would have been a pleasure to old Mr. Trevor to see, so “deep” were they, and showing so much respect. It was almost like widows’ mourning, she declared, deeper far than that which ordinary mourners wore for a parent: but then, when you considered what Lucy had lost—and gained!

But little Jock got no satisfaction out of his hat-band; he found no comfort in anything but Lucy’s hand, which he clung to as his only anchor. He went to the funeral holding fast by her, half hidden in her dress. The bystanders

were deeply touched by the sight of the young girl so composed and firm, and the poor little boy with his scared eyes. Many an eye was bent upon them, as they stood by the grave, two creatures so close together that they looked but one, yet, as all the spectators knew, so far apart in reality, so unlike each other in their prospects. Was it possible that she, a girl, was to have everything and he nothing people asked each other with indignation ? and notwithstanding the fact that all Farafield knew it was Lucilla Rainy's money which made Lucy Trevor an heiress, still it would have shocked public opinion less if the boy had inherited the larger share, though he was, as old Trevor was so feelingly aware, an insult to Lucilla Rainy. So strong is prejudice that the moral sense of the population would have felt it less had poor Lucilla's money been appropriated to make an "eldest son" of her successor's child.

The funeral had attracted a great following. The shop-keeping class, many of whom had received their education at old John Trevor's

school, and the upper class, of whom several had received lessons from him, and who were in general powerfully moved by the acquisition into their ranks of a new and unknown personage, a great heiress, who henceforward, they made no doubt, would take her fitting place among them—filled the church and churchyard, and looked on at the ceremony, if not with much sympathy, yet with great interest. Almost everybody, indeed, was there. A carriage from the Hall followed the procession from the house, and Lady Randolph herself arrived from the station before the service in the church was over, and followed to the grave, though no one had expected such a compliment, carefully dressed in black, and with a gauze veil which, Mrs. Ford remarked, was almost as “deep” as crape. It gave Lucy a certain satisfaction to see, though it was through her tears, the crowds of people; they were paying him due respect. In that, as in everything, respect was his due, and he was getting it in full measure. She felt that he himself would have been pleased had he been there;

and it was very difficult to believe that somehow or other he was not there, seeing how everything went on. He would have chuckled over it had he seen it; he would have felt the compliment; and Lucy felt it. When, however, she saw how large a party accompanied her home after all was over, and understood that she was to go into the drawing-room and hear the will read among all these people, Lucy could not but feel that it was very "trying," as Mrs. Ford said; but yet she did it dutifully, as she was told, not feeling that there was any choice left her, or that she could refuse to do whatever was thought necessary. It was difficult to disengage herself from Jock, and persuade him that it was best for him to lie down on the sofa downstairs and allow himself to be read to. He consented at last, and then Lucy felt that the loss of his small hand clinging to hers took away a great part of her strength; but she was not a girl who stopped to consider what she could or could not do. She did what she was told, always a more satisfactory rule.

There were a great many people in the room when Lucy went in, leaning, much against her will, on Mrs. Ford's arm. She was quite able to walk by herself, and did not indeed like the careful and somewhat fussy support which was given her, but she put up with it, looking straight before her, not to meet the compassionate looks which Mrs. Ford thought it part of her *rôle* to address to the orphan. "Yes, my darling, it's a great trial for you," Mrs. Ford kept saying, "a great trial, my love, but you will be supported if you are brave; and I am sure you will be brave, my dearie-dear;" now it was not Mrs. Ford's custom to call Lucy her darling and her dearie-dear, which confused the girl; but all the same she resigned herself. Some one rose when she came in and enfolded her in a large embrace. Floods of black silk, and waves of perfume, seemed to pass over her head, and then she emerged, catching her breath a little. This was Lady Randolph, who was large, but handsome and comely, and filled up a great part of what space there was to spare. Seated at a little distance was Mrs. Stone

who showed her more delicate sense of Lucy's "trial," only by giving her a look in which pity was tempered by encouragement, and a slight friendly nod. Besides these ladies, whom she identified at once, there seemed to Lucy to be a cloud of men. All were silent, looking at her as she came in : all were in black, black gloves making themselves painfully apparent on the hands of the ladies. It was before the time when black paws became the fashion on all occasions. Even Mr. Ford wore black gloves ; it was an important part of the general "respect." After a while, even the men became comprehensible to Lucy. There was Mr. Rushton, the town clerk, and Mr. Chervil from London, and another lawyer with a large blue bag, whom she did not know. Seated near these gentlemen, with an amiable patronising air which seemed to say "I am very glad to countenance you, but what can *I* have to do here ?" was, to the surprise of most of the company, the Rector, who had so placed himself that, though he did not know what he was wanted for, he had the look of being a kind of chairman

of the assembly ;” while near the door, sitting on the edge of his seat, holding his hat in one hand, and brushing it carefully with the other, was Mr. Williamson, the Dissenting Minister. Mr. Williamson did not at all know how he was to be received in this company. They were all “Church people,” even the Fords, though they had begun on other principles. And John Trevor had just been buried, though he was a staunch old Nonconformist, with the ceremonials of the church. Mr. Williamson did not know whether to be defiant or conciliatory. Sometimes he smiled at his hat, smoothing it round and round. The hat-band had been taken off, and carefully folded by to take home to his wife; in this point he had taken example by the Rector, who was very well used to the sort of thing, and did not like anything to be wasted. Clergymen’s wives are very well aware that hat-bands are always made of the richest of silk.

Mr. Rushton made a little explanation, informing the company that their late worthy

friend had wished them all to hear at least one part of his will, and to accept a trust which it had been his great desire to confide to them : and then the reading began. It is always a curious ceremonial and often affords scope for the development of strong emotions ; but in this case it was not so. There was great curiosity on the subject, but no anxiety. Once indeed, when the testator requested each person present to accept fifty pounds for a ring, a little involuntary liveliness, a rustle of attention, ran through the room. Though Lady Randolph, and Mrs. Stone, the Rector and Mr. Williamson, had nothing in common with each other, they exchanged an involuntary glance, and the corners of their mouths rose perceptibly. Fifty pounds is not much, but there are few people who would not be pleased to have such a little present made to them quite unexpectedly. Their mouths relaxed a little, there was a softening of expression, and it would be impossible to deny that Mr. Trevor rose several degrees in their opinion. But beyond this little wave of pleasurable senti-

ment there was no emotion called for, except surprise.

The will took a great deal of reading; it was a very long document, or succession of documents, for the very enumeration of the codicils took some time. These were all read in a clear monotonous voice which brought a softening haze of drowsiness on the assembly. Perhaps no individual present fully realized all the provisoës. Some of them were hid in technical language, some confused by being mixed up with long details of the money and property bequeathed. The first and chief body of the will, which bequeathed three thousand pounds in the funds to the testator's son, and all the rest of his property to his daughter, "as the only heir and descendant of her mother, my wife Lucilla Rainy through whom the property came," was brief and succinct enough. It had none of the rambling elaboration of the later additions. When John Trevor had executed it he had been still a strong man, very energetic in the management of his own affairs, but not dominated by any master

idea. It was plain justice, as he apprehended it, but he had not begun to frame the theories which filled his later days. As the will was read, the door opened and Philip Rainy came into the room. There was a slight general stir, a common movement, very faint, but universal, in disapproval of the entrance of any intruder. Everyone of those people, with no right that they knew of to be there, felt a thrill of indignation go over them at the sight of a stranger. What business had he to be present? But after the stir there was an equally general pause. Lady Randolph, the only one who did not know Philip, looked at the lawyers. But the lawyers made no response. The voice of the reader went on again, the hearers fell into their previous half drowse of attention; and the young man who had nothing at all to do with it, but who was the nearest relation of the orphans, stood in his black clothes leaning against the door. And there was not any drowse about Philip; he listened, and he made out every word.

When the codicils approached a conclusion,

the drowse disappeared from the company in general. It began to introduce their own names, which is a sure way of interesting people ; when the clause was read which described the future course of Lucy's life, how it was to be spent and where, there was a little stir among those who were immediately concerned. Lady Randolph sat up more erect in her chair, and held her head higher with a complacence and sense of importance which it would have been impossible to express more delicately ; the Fords, less well-bred, looked at each other, and Mrs. Ford began to cry. The spectators all listened keenly ; their surprise and their curiosity rose to a higher heat. Then came the appointment of the marriage committee, at which the little thrill which had been visible in the others communicated itself to all the company. Each individual sat up, straightened his or her back, holding up their several heads, and listened with a sense of importance and satisfaction, mingled with, in some of them, a perception of the ludicrous side of the arrangement ; and after this there was little more.

During the whole of the proceedings Philip Rainy, undisturbed and undisturbing, stood up leaning against the door. It was all new to him, and much of it was far from agreeable; but he made no sign. He had no business to be there—all these strangers, he could not but feel with a little bitterness, had come by invitation and had a right to the place they occupied; but he had nothing to do with it. Nevertheless it was something, it was a tacit acknowledgment that he had something to do with it that no one remonstrated or took any notice of his presence. And he took no notice, made no remark; but listened with the keenest attention. Yes, there was one on whom none of the provisions were lost, who never felt drowsy, but listened with his very ears tingling, and his mind concentrated upon what he heard; he missed nothing, the technical wording did not confuse him, each new particular stirred up his thoughts to a rapidity and energy of action such as he had never before been conscious of. He stood betraying nothing, looking at all the complacent assembly, which

regarded him as an outsider; and as each new detail was read, swiftly, silently, opposed to it in his mind a system of counter-action. All these people, with their little glow and sense of satisfaction, were to him like so many lay-figures round the table; dream-people not worth taking into consideration. But on the other side he seemed to see old Trevor chuckling and waving a visionary hand at him. "There is not a loop-hole to let you in," the old ghost seemed to say; and Philip ground his teeth, and said within him, "We shall see."

As for the members of the marriage committee, those of them who were not previously aware of the charge committed to them, were filled with amaze, and showed it each in his or her own way. Mrs. Stone and the Fords sat fast, with a half smile on their faces, by way of showing that to them the idea was already familiar. But Lady Randolph was considerably disturbed. She pushed back her chair a little, and looked round with a certain dismay, her eyes opening wider, her lips parting, her breast heaving

with a half sigh, half sob of surprise. “All these people!” she seemed to say, giving a second critical look round. The Rector was still more surprised—if that were possible; but he took his surprise in a genial way. He began to laugh gently, under his breath as it were. He was not a relation, nor even a friend, and he was not called upon to be very serious on the death of old Trevor. He laughed; but quietly and decorously, only enough to express a certain puzzled consternation and sense of absurdity, yet consciousness that old Trevor had shown a certain good sense in choosing himself. As for Mr. Williamson, he was thunderstruck; he left off smoothing his hat; he too looked round him bewildered, as if for instruction. How had his name been placed on such a list? and he ended with a furtive glance at the Rector, who was the member of the company who interested him most. When the voice of the reader stopped there was a curious momentary pause.

“This is a very astonishing arrangement,” said the Rector, rubbing his hands; “an ex-

tremely strange arrangement. I don't see how we are to carry it out. Don't you think there is something a little odd—I mean, something eccentric? there always was a certain eccentricity, eh? don't you know? in the character—”

“Our departed friend,” said Mr. Williamson, clearing his throat; “had full possession of his faculties. I saw him the day before his seizure; his intellects were as clear, I am ready to give my testimony anywhere—as clear—as yours, Sir, or mine.”

It was not very distinctly indicated to whom this was addressed; the Rector cast a slight glance at the speaker, as though he might have shrugged his shoulders; but he was too polite to do so. “But,” he went on, as though he had not been interrupted. “But—this is too extraordinary; I scarcely knew Mr. Trevor; why he should make me one of the guardians of his daughter in such an important matter I cannot understand: and associate me with—” he paused again, and then gave another glance round; “so many others—perhaps better qualified.”

"If Dr. Beresford means me—" Mr. Williamson began with a flush on his face.

"I mean no one in particular. I mean everybody—I mean that the whole idea is preposterous—why," said the Rector, bursting into a little laugh, "it is like an old play; it's like an invention in a romance—it is like—"

"Oh-h!" said Mrs. Ford, drawing in her breath. She had not intended to speak in such fine company; but this was too much for her—and it had always been believed by those who knew her most intimately that she was still a Dissenter in her heart. "Oh-h!" she said, with a little shudder. "When you consider that poor Mr. Trevor was carried out of this house, feet foremost, this very day—and before the first night that folks should laugh—"

The Rector got very red. "I beg your pardon," he said sharply, not with an apologetic voice. Mr. Williamson began once more to smooth his hat. There was in him a suppressed smile from the sole of his shoe to the top of his

head: and the Rector was aware of it, but could not take any notice, which discomposed that dignified clergyman more than if it had been a greater matter.

Mrs. Stone here interfered; naturally her sympathies were all with the Church; but she liked, at the same time, to show her superior acquaintance with the testator's wishes. "If you will allow me," she said, "I had the advantage of hearing from poor Mr. Trevor himself what he meant. He did not wish to deprive his dear daughter of the advice of one who would be her spiritual instructor. He was—not a Churchman: but he was a man of great judgment. He considered that the Rector had a right to a voice in a matter so important. But," said Mrs. Stone, suddenly, seeing Lady Randolph eager to interfere, "perhaps this is scarcely a moment to discuss the matter? And in the presence of—"

"Not at all the moment," said Lady Randolph, rising up and shaking out her flowing skirts. "These gentlemen must all be aware

that Miss Trevor, in the meantime, is my first thought. Our presence is no longer necessary, I believe. My dear?" the great lady said, offering her arm to Lucy, who was thankful to be released. All the men stood up, the Rector still red, and Mr. Williamson still smoothing his hat. The departure of the ladies had the air of a procession. Lucy was very timid and very sick at heart, longing to escape, to rest, to cry, and then to prepare herself quietly for whatever change might be coming; but she had no need of Lady Randolph's arm. Even when the heart is breaking, a mourner may be quite able to walk; and Lucy was not heart-broken, only longing to cry a little, and give vent to her natural gentle sorrow for her poor old father. But Lady Randolph drew the girl's hand within her arm, and held it there with her other hand, and whispered, "Lean upon me, my poor child." Lucy did not lean; feeling no need of support, but otherwise obeyed. Philip Rainy opened the door for the darkly-clothed procession. He too thought it right to assert himself. "I should like

to see you, Lucy," he said, "afterwards," taking no notice of the great lady, "about Jock," The name, the suggestion gave Lucy a shock of awakening. She stopped short, to Lady Randolph's surprise and alarm, and turned round suddenly, withdrawing her hand from the soft constraint of that pressure upon it. They all paused, looking at her, almost in as great surprise as if something inanimate had detached itself from the wall, and taken an independent step.

"Please, Mr. Rushton," Lucy said timidly, but clearly, "there is one thing I want to say. I will do everything—everything that papa wishes : —but about Jock—"

"About Jock?" they all came a little nearer, looking at her. Mrs. Stone put forth a hand to pat the girl's shoulder soothingly, murmuring, "Yes, dear—yes, my love, another time," with amiable moderation. But Lady Randolph would not permit any interference. She took her charge's hand again. "My dear," she said, "all these arrangements can be settled afterwards by

your friends.” Lady Randolph had no idea what was meant by Jock.

“ But I must settle this first,” Lucy said. She was very pale, and very slight and girlish, looking like a shadow in her black clothes; but there was no mistaking her quiet determination. She stood quite still, making no fuss, with her eyes fixed upon the two lawyers. “ I will do everything,” she repeated, “ only not about Jock.”

“ That is what I am here for, Lucy,” said Philip Rainy. “ I am your nearest relative. It is I who ought to have the care of Jock.”

At this point all turned their attention to Philip with sudden intelligence in their faces, and some with alarm. The nearest relative! Lucy, however, did nothing to confirm the position which Philip felt it expedient thus strongly, and, at once, to assert. She looked at him with a faint smile, and shook her head.

“ He has nobody really belonging to him but me. Mr. Rushton, please—I will do everything else—but I cannot give up Jock.”

"We'll see about it. We'll see about it, Lucy," Mr. Rushton said.

And then Lady Randolph, a little impatient, resumed her lead. "I cannot let you exert yourself so much," she said with peremptory tenderness. "I must take you away; all this will be settled quite comfortably; but my first thought is for you. I must not let you over-exert yourself. Lean upon me, my poor child!"

And thus, at last, the black-robed procession filed away.

## CHAPTER II.

## GUARDIANS.

THE ladies went away, the men remained behind: most of them took their seats again with evident relief. However agreeable the two halves of humanity may be to each other in certain circumstances, it is a relief to both to get rid of each other when there is business on hand. The mutual contempt they have for each other's modes of acting impedes hearty co-operation, and the presence of one interferes with the other's freedom. The men took their seats and drew a long breath of relief, all but Philip, the unauthorised member of the party, who felt that with Lucy his only real right to be here at all was gone.

"Well!" said the Rector, intensifying that sigh of relief into a kind of snort of satisfaction, "now that we may speak freely, Rushton, you don't expect that rubbish would bear the brunt of an English court of law? It is all romancing; the old fellow must have been laughing at you in his sleeve. Seven trustees to decide whom the girl is to marry! His mind must have been gone: and you can't imagine for a moment that this is a thing which can be carried out."

"I don't see why," said Mr. Rushton, calmly; "more absurd things have been carried out. He wants his girl to be looked after. She will have half the fortune-hunters in England after her, like flies after a honey-pot."

All the men assembled looked at the town-clerk; he was the only one among them who could possibly have any interest in the question. The Rector appreciated this fact with unusual force; he had daughters only, whereas Raymond Rushton was a likely young fellow enough. They were all somewhat suspicious of each

other, all except the personage who had read the documents, and took no part in the matter, and Mr. Chervil, a London attorney, with little time to spare, and not much interest in anything but the money, which was his trade.

“Of course there will be fortune-hunters after her. He ought,” said the Rector, who was given to laying down the law, “to have appointed a couple of trustworthy guardians, as other people do, and left it in their hands. Such an arrangement as this, no one can help seeing, is positively absurd.”

Here Ford cleared his throat expressively, with a sound which drew all eyes towards him. But the good man, having thus protested inarticulately, was shy, and shrank from speech. He retreated a step or two with involuntary precipitation. And the only defender old Trevor found was in Mr. Williamson, who nevertheless had no desire to pit himself against the Rector; he would have liked on the contrary to be liberal and friendly, and to show himself superior to all petty feeling; but he could not help taking a

special interest in everything his clerical brother, who did not admit his brotherhood, did or said. Opposition or friendship, it might be either one or the other, but indifference could not be between them. Accordingly as soon as the Rector had said anything, Mr. Williamson was instantly moved to say the reverse.

"We must not forget," he said, putting down his hat on the floor, "that our late lamented friend was carried out of this place only to-day. To call his arrangements absurd, so soon, is surely, if I may say so, not in good taste."

"Oh, as for good taste!" cried the Rector, imperatively, with a sneer upon his lips; but he stopped himself in time. He would not get into any altercation, he said to himself; it was bad enough to be confronted with Dissenters, to have one of these fanatics actually sitting down with him at the same table, but to suffer himself to be led into a controversy! "As for that," he said, "my mind is easy enough. But here is a very simple question—"

"Shall you serve, Doctor Beresford ? or do you decline it ?" Mr. Rushton said.

This was a question more simple still. The Rector turned round and stared at the other with a confused and bewildered countenance. This was not at all what he meant. He paused for a moment, and reflected before he made any answer ; would he serve, or did he decline it ? Very simple, but not so easy to answer ; would he have a finger in the pie, or give it up altogether ? would he accept the mysterious position, and keep the dear privilege of control, and the power of saying who was *not* to marry Lucy Trevor, though he cared little for Lucy Trevor ? or would he show his sense of the folly of the arrangement by rejecting any share in it ? It was, though so simple, a difficult question, much more difficult than to set down the old man, who was not a churchman, as a fool. It did not please him however to accept the latter alternative : he was a man who dearly liked to have a finger in every pie.

"Oh, ah! indeed!—yes, to be sure. That is how you put it," he said.

"Yes, that is the only way to put it," said Mr. Rushton; "we can't compel anyone to accept the charge, but we have a few names behind with which to fill up, should anyone object. My client was full of foresight," he added, with a smile, "he was very long-headed, wrong-headed too, if you like, sometimes, but sharp as a needle. He thought his little girl a great prize."

"And so she will be," said the Rector, almost with solemnity; and he was silent for a moment, as if in natural awe of Lucy's greatness; but within himself he was mentally vowing that, if Rushton tried to run his boy for such large stakes, he, the Rector, would take care that he did not have it all his own way. Dr. Beresford, though he was an excellent clergyman, was not above the use of slang now and then, nor was he too good for a resolution which had a little of the vindictive in it. "Must we be called together to be consulted?" he said, with a

laugh ; “ there’s something of the kind in an old play. Will the candidate appear before us, and state his qualifications.” The Rector again permitted himself to laugh, but nobody responded. Mr. Rushton, though he condemned the will in private, had sufficient professional feeling to decline to join in any open ridicule of it, and Ford, who felt himself in the dignified attitude of a mourner, allowed nothing to disturb his seriousness. Mr. Williamson was smoothing his hat with disapproving gravity, polishing it heavily round and round, as though he found some carnal tendency in it which had to be repressed.

“ In my opinion there is nothing to laugh at,” he said ; “ it is a grave responsibility. The choice of a God-fearing, Christian man to be the guide of the young lady, under Providence, and the trustee, as it were, of a great fortune—”

“ Oh, not so bad as that ; we have not got to choose him, only to blackball him,” said Mr. Rushton ; “ and if you think old Trevor intended that any husband should be the trustee of his

daughter's fortune, that is a mistake I assure you. She has more power in her hands than ever a girl had—even now before she is of age, she is allowed liberties—Ah!” Mr. Rushton stopped short; for Philip Rainy had stepped forward, with the evident intention of saying something. They all looked at Philip. He was well-known to everyone present—regarded favourably by the Rector, as one who had seen the evil of his ways, and with a grudge by Mr. Williamson as a deserter from the Nonconformist cause, and with careless friendliness by Mr. Rushton, as a man who was only a rising man, and to whom he was conscious of having himself given a helping hand. To Ford, Philip was a member of the family, who rather set himself above the family, and therefore was the object of certain restrained grudges, but yet was a Rainy after all; thus the feeling of the company, about him was mingled. Nevertheless, when they suddenly turned upon him, and recalled themselves to a recollection of his presence and his position, and all that was in his favour, and the indica-

tions of nature, which pointed him out as so likely a candidate, they all instinctively fore-stalled the future, and on the spot blackballed Philip, who stood before them unconscious of his fate.

“I do not wish to intrude,” he said; “though if anyone has a right to know about my cousins I have. I am their nearest relation. I am—” and here he put on a certain dignity, though the Rainys were not a noble race—“I believe the head of the family since my father’s death. But what I want to say is this; if you, as his legal guardians, do not object, I should like to take charge of Jock.”

(“Who is Jock?” said the Rector, in an undertone. There was no one to answer but Mr. Williamson, who replied in the same tone, without looking at him, “The little boy.” It was the first distinct communication that had passed between them. Dr. Beresford looked at the Nonconformist with a hump of half angry carelessness and turned away; but yet he could not help it, he had distinctly realized the presence

of the Minister of Bethesda, which was a great thorn in his side. On former occasions he had said “I know nothing about that sort of people ;” but that advantage was now taken from him. He had become acquainted with the man, though he was his natural enemy.

“ Take charge of Jock ?—with all my heart ;” said the lawyer. “ You could not do anything that would please me more ; he has been one of our difficulties. Look here, Chervil, here is the very best thing that could happen. Mr. Rainy, a relation, a—a gentleman in the scholastic profession ;” here he stopped, and made a little grimace. “ There will be a moderate allowance for him,” he continued, with a laugh ; “ all that is easy enough : but there’s his sister to be taken into consideration, you know.”

“ If I have your consent, I think I can manage Lucy,” said Philip, calmly. He spoke with great distinctness, and he meant them all to understand him. It was as if a thunderbolt had been thrown in their midst : a young fellow like this, nobody in particular, to call the heiress

Lucy! Mr. Rushton called her so himself, and so did Ford, and the Minister; but all at once such familiarity had come to sound profane. It was quite profane in young Rainy, a mere schoolmaster, to speak so familiarly of that golden girl. They all drew back with a distinct shiver. As for the Rector, he again ventured on a little laugh.

"You are a bold fellow, Rainy," he said. "To talk of a young lady whom we all respect so much, by her Christian name."

"I have known her all my life, doctor; we are cousins." There was no idea of this great respect then. "I will speak to her at once."

The way in which the matrimonial committee drew in their breath, made a distinct sound in the room. Speak to her, good heavens!—a schoolmaster—a nobody! "You will remember," said Ford, with solemnity; "that this is the day of her father's funeral. To speak to her—about any such matters—"

"What matters?" Philip knew very well what they meant; but he liked to play upon

their apprehensions. " You may be sure," he said, with malicious gravity ; " I shall say nothing to distress her. She knows me, and I think she has confidence in me."

" And you forget," said Mr. Chervil, who was cool, and had his wits about him, " that it's only about little Jock."

" To be sure, to be sure ; it is not about anything very important," said the committee, in full accord, " it's only about little Jock."

And then they all laughed, but not with a very good grace. There was no fault at all to be found with him, an honest, honourable rising young man—and the girl had no right to anything better; but what was the use of appointing a committee of seven to watch over this momentous event, if Lucy's fortune was to fall like a ripe apple from the tree into the mouth of Mr. Philip Rainy ? The Rector who had thought the stipulations so absurd, and had asked, almost with indignation, whether anyone could ever hope to carry them out, even he looked with indignation at Philip. It was like cutting the ground from

under their feet, settling the whole business before it had even begun. It was a thing not to be tolerated at all. There was not a word more said by anybody about the unnecessariness of Mr. Trevor's precautions after this specimen, as they all felt it, of the dangers that had to be gone through.

While this was going on upstairs, Lady Randolph led Lucy into Mrs. Ford's sitting-room, "as if it had been her own," that excellent woman said, though she was very willing on the whole that her parlour should be made use of, and indeed for long after took special care of the chair upon which Lady Randolph had sat down. Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Stone followed. There was a pause after they had all seated themselves, for these two other personages were somewhat jealous in their eagerness to hear every syllable that fell from Lady Randolph's lips, and Lady Randolph studiously ignored them. It was she who for the moment was mistress of the situation; she put Lucy tenderly upon the sofa, and drew a chair close to it.

" You are doing too much," she said ; " after all the excitement and the grief you want rest, or we shall have you ill on our hands."

" That is what I am always telling her, my lady," said Mrs. Ford.

Mrs. Stone smiled. " Lucy will not get ill," she said, " her strength is intact; I don't think Lady Randolph need have any fear on that account."

But Mrs. Stone's interference was not relished by anyone. Lady Randolph glanced slightly at her, but took no notice; while Mrs. Ford was somewhat irritated that Lucy should be thought robust and able to bear a great sorrow without suffering. They were all very anxious to persuade the girl to " put up her feet," and take care of herself.

" A change, an entire change is what you want," Lady Randolph said, " and indeed I think that is what we must do. It does not matter if you are not prepared; of course you will want a great many things—but those can be got better in London than anywhere

else, I should like you to come with me at once."

Lucy, who had been half reclining on the sofa cushions to please her new friend, here raised herself with an energy which was not at all in keeping with her supposed exhaustion. "At once!" she said with alarm, not perceiving at the moment that this was not complimentary to Lady Randolph. When she perceived it, Lucy's politeness was put to a severe test. She had a little awe of her future guardian, and she was very dutiful, more disposed by nature to do what she was told than to rebel. She added faintly a gentle remonstrance. "I thought there would have been a little time to get ready; the dressmaker has only sent a few of the things; and then," she said, as if the argument was final, "we have had no time at all to get Jock's things in order. I would have to wait for Jock."

"Jock!" said Lady Randolph with the greatest surprise.

And then there was another pause. "I told

you, Lucy," said Mrs. Ford, "that her Ladyship knew nothing about Jock, that she would never hear of taking a little boy into her house. A young lady is one thing, but a little boy—a little boy is quite different; I told you her Ladyship would never hear of it." In the satisfaction of having known it all the time, Mrs. Ford almost forgot the inconveniences of the position. Lucy sat bolt upright upon her sofa, disregarding all the fictions about necessary rest, and looked round upon them with a little spark in each of her blue eyes.

"My love," said Mrs. Stone in a low tone, "you have always intended and wished to send Jock to school, you must not forget that—"

There was nothing hostile to the new reign in these two women, at least not in this respect. Their depreciation and soothing were quite sincere. But Lady Randolph was a woman who had all her wits about her. She watched every indication of the thorny new ground which she was treading with a watchful eye. And she saw that Lucy's expression changed from that of quiet

gravity and sadness into an energy, which was almost impassioned. The girl's hands caught at each other, her lips quivered, every feature moved.

"He is all I have," Lucy cried out suddenly, "everything I have! and he is such a little, little fellow; oh, don't mind petting me, what do I care for dresses or things? but I want Jock; oh let me have Jock!"

"Hush, hush, Lucy; hush, dear," whispered Mrs. Stone, with sympathetic looks, and Mrs. Ford put her handkerchief to her eyes, and vowed sobbing that she would take every care of him. They were both half frightened by the sudden vehemence, which was so unlike Lucy. And at this moment there was a knock at the door, and Philip Rainy put in his head.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but may I speak to Lucy for a moment? I thought you would like to know that they have no objections, Lucy—not the least objection. I am to have Jock. I told Mr. Rushton that I felt sure you would trust him to me."

Lucy felt that she had no longer any power of

speech. She put her hands together instinctively, and gave Lady Randolph a piteous look ; her heart swelled as if it would burst. Was it a judgment upon her for not being heart-broken, as perhaps she ought to have been, for the loss of her father ? To have little Jock taken away from her was like tearing a piece of herself away.

But Lady Randolph had all her wits about her. It was not likely, if the sight of this comely young man who called the heiress Lucy, had alarmed even the men upstairs, that a woman would be less alive to the danger. She took Lucy's hands into her own, and pressed them kindly between hers.

"I don't know this gentleman, my dear," she said, "and I don't doubt he is very kind ; but I am sure it would be mistaken kindness to separate these two poor children now. Just after one great loss, she is not in a fit state to bear another wrench. No. I don't know who Jock is, and I have not much room in my little house : but you shall have your Jock, my dear. I will not be

the one to take him from you," Lady Randolph said.

This was a thing which no one had so much as thought of. They all gazed at her with wonder and admiration, while Lucy in the sudden relief fell a-crying, more subdued and broken down than she had yet shown herself. While the girl was being caressed and soothed, Mrs. Stone went away, finding no room for her own ministrations. She said, "That is a very clever woman," to Philip Rainy at the door.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE NEW LIFE.

LADY RANDOLPH made haste to strike while the iron was hot. She *was* a clever woman, conscious enough (though perhaps no more than other people) of her own interests, and with schemes in her mind (as everybody had) of other interests to be served through the heiress, whom it had been one of the successes of her later life to obtain the charge of; but, having got this, she had no other intention than to treat Lucy kindly, and to make her life, which would add so many comforts to Lady Randolph's, pleasant and happy to herself. The best way to do this was to win the girl's heart. Lady

Randolph had not been seized with love at first sight for her new charge ; but she was rather prepossessed than otherwise by Lucy's appearance, and she was anxious to get hold of her and secure her affections with as little delay as possible ; and when she informed Mrs. Ford, as she sipped the cup of tea which that excellent woman prepared for her, that she was going to pass the night at the Hall, and that to return to that scene of her happier life was always "a trial" to her, she had already touched a chord of sympathy in Lucy's heart.

"What I should like," Lady Randolph said, "would be that you should come with me, my dear. It would be a great matter for me. The Hall belongs to Sir Thomas now, my nephew, you know. He is very kind to me, and I look upon him almost as a son, and his house is always open to me ; but when you remember that I was once mistress there, and spent a happy life in it, and that now I am all alone, meeting ghosts in every room——"

Lucy's heart came to her eyes. It was all

true that Lady Randolph said, but perhaps no such statement, made for the purpose of calling forth sympathy, ever achieves its end without leaving a certain sense of half-aroused shame in the mind of the successful schemer. Lady Randolph was touched by the warmth of feeling in the girl's eyes, and she was half ashamed of herself for the conscious exaggeration which had called it forth. Mrs. Ford was very sympathetic.

"I have never been so bad as that," she said, "I have always had company ; I have never lost an 'usband, like you, my lady : but I feel for your ladyship all the same."

"And I shrink from going back," said Lady Randolph, "and going all alone. I think if Lucy could come with me—it would be a great thing for me ; and we should have time to make acquaintance with each other ; and Mrs. Ford, I am sure, would look after all the things, and bring them and the little brother to meet us at the station to-morrow. Will you begin our life

together by being kind to me, Lucy?" she said, with a smile.

There were difficulties, great difficulties, to be apprehended from Jock ; but Lucy could not refuse such an appeal ; and this was how it happened, that to the great surprise of Farafield, she was seen in her little crape bonnet and veil (much too old for her, Lady Randolph at once decided) driving in the grey of the wintry afternoon through the chilly streets—the day her father was buried ! there were some people who thought it very unfeeling. When it was mentioned at dinner in the big house in the Market Place inhabited by the town-clerk, Mrs. Rushton was very much scandalised.

"The very day of the funeral!" she cried ; "they might have let her keep quiet one day ; for I don't blame the girl, how was she to know any better ? I always said it was a fatal thing for Lucy when that old fool of a father chose a fashionable fine lady for her guardian. Oh don't speak to me, I have no patience with him. I think, from beginning to end, there never was

such a ridiculous will. If it had been me, I should have taken it into Court, I should have had it broke—”

“ You might have found it difficult to do that. How would you have had it broke, I should like to know ? ” her husband said.

“ Ladies’ law,’ said Mr. Chervil, who was very busy with his dinner, and did not care to waste words.

“ It is not my trade,” said Mrs. Rushton, “ that’s your business. I can tell you I should have done it had it been in my hands. But it’s not in my hands, a woman never has a chance. You may talk of ladies’ law ! but this I know, that if we had the law to make it would not be so silly. A woman would have known what was for the girl’s true advantage ; we would have said to old Mr. Trevor, don’t be such an old fool. We should have told him boldly—such and such a thing is not for your girl’s advantage. Had any of you men the courage to do that ? And the result is, Lucy is in the hands of a fashionable lady who can’t live without excitement, and

takes her out to drive on the day of her father's funeral. I never heard anything like it, for my part."

This indignation, however, was scarcely called for by the facts of the case; and yet the event was very important for Lucy. There was not much excitement, from Mrs. Rushton's point of view, in the afternoon drive along the wintry roads to the Hall, which was nearly five miles out of Farafield. The days were still short, and the February afternoon was rainy and gloomy, and the latter part of the way was between two lines of bare and dusky hedgerows, with here and there a spectral tree waving darkly against the unseen sky; not a cheerful moment, nor was the landscape cheerful; an expanse of damp and darkling fields, long lines of vague road, no light anywhere, save the glimpses of reflection in wet ditches or pools of muddy water. Lady Randolph shivered, wrapping herself close in her furs; but for Lucy all was full of intense sensation and consciousness, which might be called excitement, though its

effect upon her was to make her quieter and more outwardly serious than usual. From the moment when she stepped into the carriage, Lucy felt herself in a new world. The life she had been used to lead wanted no comforts, so far as she was aware, but the rooms at the Terrace had possessed no charm, and the best vehicle with which Lucy was acquainted was the shabby fly of the neighbourhood, which lived at the livery-stables round the corner, and served all the inhabitants of the Terrace for all their expeditions. Lucy felt the difference when she suddenly found herself in the soft atmosphere of luxury which surrounded her for the first time in Lady Randolph's carriage, a little sphere by itself, a little moving world of wealth and refinement, where the very air was different from the muggy air of the commonplace world; and as they drove up the fine avenue, with all its tall trees rustling and waving against the faint greyness of the sky, and saw the great outline of the Hall dimly indicated by irregular specks of light, Lucy felt as if she were in a dream, but a dream that was

more real than any waking certainty. She followed Lady Randolph into the great hall and up the wide spacious staircase, with these mingled sensations growing more and more strongly upon her. It was a dream ; the noiseless servants, the luxurious carpets in which her foot sank, the great pictures, the space and largeness everywhere, no single feature of the place escaped her observation. It was a dream, yet it was more real than all the circumstances of the past existence, which now had become dreams and shadows, things which were over. She stepped not into a strange house only, but into a new life, when she crossed the threshold. This was the life her father had always told her of ; he had told her it would begin when he died, and had prepared her to take her place in it, always holding before her an ideal sketch of the position which was to be hers ; and now it had come. The very fact that her entrance into this new world was made on his funeral day, gave to the new life that aspect of springing out of the old which he had always impressed upon her. She

had lost no time, not a day, and the transition was natural, in being so sudden and so strange.

The Hall was a beautiful old house, stately in all its details, huge, and ample, and lofty. To go into it was like walking into a picture. There was a great mirror in the hall, which reflected her slim figure in its new crape and blackness stepping dubiously forward, making her think for a moment that it was some one else she saw, a girl with a pale face, strange to everything, who did not know which way to turn. Lady Randolph took her upstairs to a dim room, pervaded by ruddy firelight, and with glimmering candles lighted here and there. "You shall have this little room to-night, for it is near mine," Lady Randolph said. Lucy thought it was not a little, but a large room, bigger than any bedroom in the Terrace, and more comfortable than anything she had ever dreamt of. The badly-built draughty rooms in the Terrace were not half so warm as this soft silken cushioned nook. Lucy lay down doubtfully on the sofa as her new

friend ordained, but her mind was far too active, and her imagination too hazy, to permit her perfect rest. Lady Randolph's maid, a soft-voiced, noiseless person, came to her and brought her tea, opening the little bag she had brought, and arranging everything she wanted, as Lucy's wants had never been provided for before. All this had a bewildering, yet an awakening effect upon her. She lay for a little while upon the sofa warm and still, and cried a little, which relieved the incipient headache over her heavy eyes. Poor papa! he was gone as he had always planned and intended, and had left her to begin this new life, which he had drawn out and mapped before her feet. And how many things he had left her to do, things which it overawed her to think of. A flutter of anxiety woke in her heart, even now, as she wondered how she should ever be capable of doing them by herself without guidance, so ignorant as she was and inexperienced. But yet she would do them. She would obey everything, she would follow all his instructions, Lucy vowed to herself with a

thrill of resolution, and a dropping of tears, which relieved, and at the same time exhausted her. But the exhaustion was a kind of refreshment. And after a while Lady Randolph came back, after Lucy had bathed her eyes, and smoothed back her fair hair, and took her down stairs.

"I am glad Tom is away," Lady Randolph said, "we will have it all to ourselves. To-morrow I will show you the house, and to-night we shall have a little quiet chat, and make friends."

She gave Lucy's hand a little pressure with her arm, and led her out of one softly lighted room into another, from the drawing-room to the dining-room where they sat down in the midst of the surrounding dimness at a shining table, all white and bright, with flowers upon it, unknown at this season in the Terrace. Lucy felt a thrill of awe when the family butler, most respectable of functionaries, put her chair close to the table as she sat down. Once more she caught a glimpse of herself in a mirror which reflected her

from head to foot, and wondered who it could be sitting there gazing at her with that little pale familiar face.

After the meal was over they went back to a little inner drawing-room, to reach which they had to go through a whole suite of half-lighted, luxurious rooms, all softly warm with firelight. “This used to be my favourite room,” Lady Randolph said, sighing as she looked round. It was called the little drawing-room, and Lady Randolph spoke of it as a little nook; but it was bigger than the drawing-room at the Terrace. Here the girl was set down in a comfortable chair by the fire, and listened while Lady Randolph told of her former life here, and all she had done. “Tom is very kind,” she said, “but how can I come here without meeting ghosts, the ghosts of all my happy days?”

Lucy listened with that devout attention which only youth so innocent and natural as hers can give to the recollections of one who has “gone through” these scenes of actual life which are all mystery and wonder to itself. Lucy had no

ghosts in her memory; her father was not far enough off from her, nor was her sense of loss so strong as to make her feel that the world was henceforward peopled with sad recollections; but there was enough enlightenment in the touch of natural grief to make her understand. She was glad to be allowed to listen quietly—to feel the ache in her heart softened and subdued, and the lull of great exhaustion falling over her. That ache of natural, not excessive sorrow, is almost an additional luxury in such a case. It justifies the languor and gives an ennobling reason for it. And in a mind so young the very existence of sorrow, the first touches of experience, the sense of really experiencing in its own person those emotions which it has heard of all its life, which are the inspiration of all tragedies, and the theme of all stories, carry with them an exquisite consciousness which is near enjoyment, though it is pain. Lucy was perhaps in her own constitution too simply matter-of-fact to feel all this—yet she did feel it vaguely. She was no longer a schoolgirl insignificant and happy,

but a pale young woman in deep mourning who had taken a first step into the experiences of life. She leant back in her chair with that ache in her heart which she was almost proud of, yet with a sense of luxurious well-being round her, warmth, softness, kindness—and her hand in Lady Randolph's hand. Her shyness had melted away under the kind looks of her new friend ; Lucy was too composed to be very shy by nature, but even the silence was not embarrassing to her, which is the greatest test of all.

It was easy after that to go on to talk of herself a little. Lady Randolph had become honestly interested in her young companion ; Lucy was in every way so much better than she had expected. Even the hand which she had taken into her own was, now she had time to think of it, an agreeable surprise. Lucy's hand was small and soft, and as prettily shaped as if she had been born a princess. These indications of race, which are so infallible in romance, do not always hold in actual life. The old school-master's daughter had no beauty to speak of;

but her hand was as delicate as if the bluest blood in the world ran in her veins. Lady Randolph felt that Providence had been very good to her in this respect, for, indeed, she could not but feel that a large red coarse hand was what might have been expected in the little *parvenue*. But Lucy was not coarse in any particular ; she would never come to the pitch of refinement which that princess reached, who felt a pea through fifteen mattresses ; but her quiet straightforwardness could never be vulgar. This certainty relieved her future chaperon from her worst fears.

“ My house is not like this,” Lady Randolph said ; “ London houses are small ; but I try to make it comfortable. I have partly arranged your rooms for you ; but I have left you all the finishing touches. It will amuse you to settle your pretty things about you yourself.”

“ I have not any pretty things,” said Lucy ; “ I have nothing but—” Jock, she was going to say ; but she was not sure of the prudence of the speech, seeing Jock was her grand difficulty in life.

“Never mind,” said Lady Randolph, “nothing can be easier than to get them; and you must have a maid—unless indeed there is one that you would like to bring with you. I should prefer a new one, a stranger who would not make any comparisons, who would easily fall into the ways of my house.”

“I have no one,” said Lucy, eagerly; “I have never been accustomed to anything of the kind. I never had a maid in my life.”

“Well, my dear, it has not been a very long life. We must find you a nice maid. Of course you will not go out this year; but there will be plenty of things to interest you. Are you very fond of music? or anything else? you must tell me what you like best.”

“I can play—a little, Lady Randolph, not anything to speak of;” said Lucy, with the instinct of a school-girl. She did not even think of music in any higher sense.

“Then that is not your *spécialité*; have you a *spécialité*, Lucy? Perhaps it is Art?”

“I can draw—a very little, Lady Randolph.”

Lucy's questioner laughed. "Then I am in hopes," she said, "great hopes! that you are a real, honest, natural, ignorant girl, like what we used to be. Don't say you are scientific, Lucy! I could not understand that."

"I am very sorry," said Lucy, with confusion; "Mrs. Stone gave me every advantage, but I never was quick at learning. I am not even a great reader, Lady Randolph; I don't know what you will think of me."

"If that is all, Lucy, I think I can put up even with that."

"But Jock is!" cried Lucy, seizing the opportunity with sudden temerity. "You would not believe what he has read—every kind of history and poetry, though he is so little. And he has never had any advantages. Papa always thought me the most important, because of my money; but now," said Lucy, with a little excitement, "now! It is the only thing in which I will ever go against him—I told him so always, so I hope it is not wicked to do it now—what I want most is to make something of Jock."

Now Lady Randolph was not interested in Jock. Her warmth of sympathy was a little chilled by this outburst, and the chill re-acted upon her companion. "We shall have plenty of time to talk of this," Lady Randolph said; "it is getting late: and you have had a very exhausting day. I think the first thing to be done is to have a good night's rest."

Next day there was a great gathering at Farafield station, when the carriage from the Hall drove up with Lady Randolph and her charge. The Fords had arrived bringing Jock, a pallid little figure all black, in unimaginable depths of mourning, and with a most anxious little countenance; for Jock had spent a miserable night, not crying as is the case generally with children, but framing a hundred terrors in his imagination, and half believing that Lucy had been spirited away, and would come back for him no more. The convulsive clutch which he made at her hand, and the sudden relaxation of all the lines of his eager little face as he recovered his sheet-anchor, his sole support and companion, went to Lucy's

heart. She was almost as glad to see him. It was natural to feel him hanging upon her, trotting in her very footsteps, not letting her go for a moment. Philip Rainy was also there to bid his cousin good-bye; and in the sight of everybody, he took her by the arm and led her apart, and had a few minutes earnest conversation with Lucy. This talk was almost exclusively about Jock, but it was looked upon with great surprise and jealousy by several pairs of eyes. For Mrs. Stone had also come to the station to bid her pupil farewell, and she was accompanied by her nephew, Mr. St. Clair, who stood looking his handsomest, and holding his head high over the group in the pleasant consciousness of being much the tallest and most imposing personage among them. There was also a group of school-girls, under the charge of Mademoiselle, all ready to bestow kisses and good-wishes, and a few easy tears upon Lucy. And Mr. Rushton had come to see his ward off, with his wife and their son, Raymond, in attendance. All the elder people looked on

Philip Rainy with suspicion ; but all the more did he hold Lucy by the sleeve talking to her, and keeping the rest of her friends waiting. When she did get to the carriage at last, it was through a tumult of leave-takings, which made the very guards and porters tearful. Mrs. Ford stood crying, saying, “ God bless you ! ” at intervals ; and Mrs. Stone folded her pupil in a close embrace. “ Remember, Lucy, that you are coming back in six months, according to your good father’s will ; and I hope you will not have forgotten your old friends,” she said with a mixture of affection and authority. Mr. St. Clair stood with his hat off, smiling and bowing. “ May I say good-bye too ? And good luck ! ” he said, enveloping Lucy’s black glove in his large soft white hand. He was the tallest and the biggest there, and that always makes an impression upon a girl’s imagination. Then the Rushtons came forward and took her into their group. “ I felt that I must come to give you my very best wishes,” Mrs. Rushton said, “ and here is Raymond, your old playfellow, who hopes

you remember him, Lucy. He only came home last night, but he would come to see you off." Then the girls all rushed at their comrade, whom they all envied, though some of them were sorry for her. " You will be sure to write," they cried with one voice, and a succession of hugs. " And, oh, Lucy!" cried Katie Russell, " please go and see mamma!" It was with difficulty that she was helped into the carriage after all these encounters, a little dishevelled, smiling and crying, and with Jock all hidden and wound up in her skirts. But the person who extricated her, and put her into the carriage was Philip, who held steadily to his superior rights. He was the last to touch her hand, and he said, " Remember!" as the train began to move, as solemnly as did the solemn King on the scaffold. This cost Philip more than one dinner-party, and may almost be said to have damaged his prospects at Farafield. " Did you ever see such presumption," Mrs. Rushton said, " pushing in before you, her guardian?" And he was not asked to the Rushtons for a long time after, not

till they were in absolute despair for a stray man to fill a corner. It was like the dispersion of a congregation from some special service to see all the people streaming away. And Lucy was the subject of a hundred fears and doubts. They shook their heads over her, all but the school-girls, who thought it would be too delightful to be Lucy. It was thus that Lucy set out upon the world.

## CHAPTER IV.

## LADY RANDOLPH'S MOTIVE.

THE past seemed entirely swept away and obliterated from Lucy, when she found herself in Lady Randolph's London house, inhabiting two rooms charmingly and daintily furnished, with a deft and respectful maid belonging to herself, at her special call, and everything that it was desirable a young lady of fortune should have. The allowance made for her was very large, so her father had willed, and her new guardian employed it liberally. Needless to say that Lady Randolph was not herself rich ; but she was not greedy or grasping. She liked dearly the large additional income

she had to spend, but she had no wish to make economies from it at Lucy's cost. Economies, indeed, were not in Lady Randolph's way. She liked a large liberal house. She liked the sense of a full purse into which she could put her hand without fear of the supply failing (who does not?) She liked the power of moving about as she pleased, of filling her house with visitors, and making herself the cheerful beneficent centre of a society not badly chosen. She was most willing to give her charge "every advantage," and to spend the large income she brought with her entirely upon the life which they were to lead together. Old Trevor was shrewd; he knew what he was doing—and his choice carried out his intentions fully. Lady Randolph was pleased to have a great heiress to bring out, and she was anxious to bring her out in the very best way. Her object on her own side was, no doubt, selfish—in so far that to live liberally was pleasant to her; and to spend largely, a kind of necessity of her nature. But all this largeness and liberality, which were so pleasant to

herself, were exactly what was wanted, according to her father's plan, for Lucy—to whom Lady Randolph communicated the advantages procured by her money with all the lavish provision for her pleasure which a doting mother might have made. In all this there was a fine high-spirited honourableness about Lucy's new guardian. She scorned to save a penny of the allowance. And we are bound to add that this course of procedure did not approve itself (what course ever does?) to Lady Randolph's friends. While Lucy was being established in those luxurious, yet simple, rooms, which were good enough for a princess, yet so little *fine*, that Lucy's simplicity had not yet found out how delicate and costly they were, Lady Randolph's small coterie of advisers were censuring her warmly downstairs.

" You ought to lay by half of it," old Lady Betsinda Molyneux was saying at the very moment, when Lucy, with tranquil pleasure, aided by Jock in a state of half-resentful, half-happy excitement, was putting a set of pretty books into the low bookshelves that lined her little

sitting-room ; “ You ought to lay by one half of it. Good life ! a girl like that to get the advantage of being in your house at all ! Instead of petting her, and getting her everything that you can think of, she ought to be too thankful if you put her in the housemaid’s closet. If you don’t show a little wisdom now, I will despair of you, my dear,” the old lady said. She was an old lady of the first fashion ; but she was all the same a very grimy old lady with a moustache, and a complexion which suggested coal-dust rather than *poudre de riz*. Her clothes would have been worth a great deal to an antiquary, notwithstanding that they were all shaped, more or less, in accordance with the fashion ; but they gave Lady Betsinda the air of an animated rag-bag ; and she wore a profusion of lace, clouds of black upon her mantle, and ruffles of white about her thin and dingy neck—but it would have been a misnomer, and also an insult, to call that lace white. It was frankly dirty, and toned to an indescribable colour by years and wear. She was worth a small fortune where she stood with

all her old trumpery upon her; and yet a clean old woman in a white cap and apron would have been a much fairer spectacle. Her rings flashed as she moved her quick bony wrinkled hands, which were of a colour as indescribable as her lace. It would have been hard to have seen any signs of noble race in Lady Betsinda's hands; and yet the queer old figure hung round with festoons of lace, and clothed in old black satin as thick as a modern party wall, could not have been anything but that of a woman of rank. Her garments smelt not of myrrh and frankincense, but of camphor, in which they were always put away to preserve them; and the number of times these garments had been through the hands of Lady Betsinda's patient maid, and the number of stitches that were required to keep them always in order was more than anybody, except the hard-worked official who had charge of the old lady's wardrobe, could say.

"I think so too," said a small and delicate person who was seated in a deep low chair upon the other side of the fire. She was not old like Lady

Betsinda. She was a fragile, little, pale woman approaching fifty, the wife of an eminent lawyer and a little leader of society in her way. She wrote a little, and drew a little, and sang a little, and was a great patroness of artists, to whom, it need not be said, Mrs. Berry-Montagu was very superior, gracious to them as a queen to her courtiers; while young painters, and young writers, and young actors were very obsequious to her, as to a woman who could, their elders told them, "make their fortunes." And there was more truth than usual in this, for though Mrs. Berry-Montagu could not make anybody's fortune, she could do something to mar it, and very frequently exercised that less amiable power, writing pretty little *critiques* which made the young people wince, and damning their best efforts with elegant depreciation. These were two of the friends who took Lady Randolph's moral character and social actions under their control. Most women, especially those who are widows, have a superintending tribunal of this description, before which all their actions are

judged ; and nowhere does the true dignity of the woman who is married come out with more imposing force than in such circumstances. Lady Betsinda was vehement ; she was old and the daughter of a duke, and had a very good right to say what she pleased, and keep the rest of the world in order. But Mrs. Berry-Montagu was, so to speak, two people. Her views were enlarged, as everybody acknowledged tacitly by her possession of that larger shadow of a husband behind her—and she had a great unexpressed contempt for all women who were without that dual dignity. A smile of the softest disdain—nay the word is too strong—and so is derision ; also much too potent for the delicate subdued amusement with which she contemplated the doings of the *femme sole* of all classes—hovered about her lips. This did not spring from any special devotion on her part to her husband, or faith in him, but only from her consciousness of her own good fortune and dignity, and the high position she occupied in consequence of his existence. We have given

too much space to the description of Lady Randolph's privy council. Has not every solitary woman in society a governing body which is much the same?

"I think so too," Mrs. Berry-Montagu said, "you ought really to think of yourself a little; self-renunciation is a beautiful virtue; but then we are not called upon to exercise it for everybody, and a girl of this description is fair game."

"If I were a hunter," said Lady Randolph.

"Oh, my dear, don't tell me, you are all hunters," said the little lady in serene superiority. "What do you take her for? You are not one of the silly women that want a girl to take about with them, to be an excuse for going to parties; therefore you must have an object. Now, of course, we don't want to know, till you tell us, what that object is; but in the meantime you ought, it is your duty, to derive a little advantage on your side from what is so great an advantage on hers."

"That's speaking like a book," said Lady

Betsinda, "but I like to be plain for my part; you ought to lay by half, my dear. You want to go to Homburg when the season's over, that stands to reason ; and when you come back you've got dozens of visits to pay—the most expensive thing in the world—and after all this won't last for ever ; there will come a time when she will marry, or set up for herself; that's quite common now-a-days ; girls do it, and nobody thinks any harm."

"Oh, she will marry," said Mrs. Berry-Montagu with a significant smile.

"Most likely she'll marry ; but not so sure as it once was," said Lady Betsinda, nodding her old head, "women's ways have changed ; I don't say if it is better or worse, but they have changed ; and anyhow it is your duty to look after yourself. Now don't you think it her duty to look after herself? Disinterestedness and so forth, are all very fine. We know you're unselfish, my dear."

"Every woman is unselfish ; it is the appropriate adjective," said Mrs. Berry-Montagu,

“but you must recollect that you have no one to look after your interests, and that, however it goes against you, you *must* take *yourselv*e into consideration.”

“Oh, this is all much too fine for me!” cried the culprit on her trial. “Rather congratulate me on having been so lucky. I might have found myself with a vulgar hoyden, or a little silly *parvenue* on my hands—and here is a quiet little well-bred person, as composed, and with as much good sense—I am afraid with more good sense than I have myself.”

“Yes, she will make her own out of you. You are just a little simpleton, Mary Randolph, though you’re twice as big and half as old as me. She’ll turn you round her little finger. Isn’t your whole house turned upside down for her and her belongings? Why, there was a child about! a big pair of eyes, not much more! are you taking him *pardessus le marché*? She is capable of it,” cried the old lady, shaking a cloud of camphor out of her old satin skirts in impatience, and appealing to her colleague.

Mrs. Berry-Montagu put some eau-de-cologne on her handkerchief and applied it tenderly to her nose.

"You continue to use patchouli. I *hoped* it had gone *completely* out of fashion," she said.

"It isn't patchouli. I have my things carefully looked after, that's why they last so well. I have little bags of camphor in all my dresses. It is good for everything. Many people think it is only moths that camphor is useful for, but it is good for everything—and a very wholesome scent. I hate perfumes myself."

"Who is the little boy?" said Mrs. Berry-Montagu, with a languid smile.

"Ah! that is the sore point," said Lady Randolph. "There is a little brother."

This was echoed by both the ladies in different tones of amazement.

"Then how is it that *she* has the money?" Lady Betsinda asked.

"It came from Lucy's mother; the boy had nothing to do with it, he has not a penny. Poor

child ! I can see Lucy is disturbed about him. He has three thousand pounds, and nothing more."

"Dear Lady Randolph, how good you are," said Mrs. Berry-Montagu, with gentle derision ; "what can you want with a child like this in your house?"

"What can I do ? Lucy would be wretched without him ; he is the only tie she has, the only duty. What am I to do ?"

Mrs. Berry-Montagu shook her head softly, and smiled once more—smiled with the utmost significance. " You must, indeed, see your way very clearly," she said, with that gentle languor which sat so well upon her ; "when you burden yourself with the boy."

"I don't know what you mean by seeing my way ;" Lady Randolph said, with some heat. An uncomfortable flush came upon her face, and something like consciousness to her manner. "I had no alternative. Taking Lucy, I was almost bound to take her brother too—when I found out her devotion to him."

"Ah you're too good, too good, my dear, you

don't think half enough of your own interests ;" said Lady Betsinda. " If the girl had come to me, I'll tell you what I should have done. I'd have been kind to her, but not too kind. I'd have let her see clearly that little brothers are sent to school. I'd have given her to understand that I was doing her a great favour in having her at all. She should not have wanted for anything : I don't advise you or anybody to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs ; but to make her the chief interest, and everything to give way to her, that's what I would never do."

" I am afraid I shall have to take my own way, so far as that goes," said Lady Randolph, roused to a little offence.

" Yes, dear, of course you will take your own way, we all do," said Mrs. Berry-Montagu, giving her friend a kiss before she went away, " and I don't doubt it will all come right in the end."

The two visitors went out together, and they stopped to talk for a moment before they parted

at the door of the little stuffy brougham, which carried Lady Betsinda from one place to another.

“I suppose she has something in her head?” said the old lady. And, “Oh, who can doubt it?” said the other; “Sir Tom!”

Was it true? Lady Randolph was very angry and impatient as she turned from the door, after the kiss which she had bestowed on each. Women have to kiss, as men shake hands; it is the established formula of parting among friends, not to be omitted, which would imply a breach, because of a little momentary flash of irritation. But the cause of her anger was not so much what they had said to her as that word of mutual confidence which she knew would pass between them at the door; was it true? If it had not been so, Lady Randolph would not have divined it. She paced up and down her pretty drawing-room, giving one glance from the window to see, as she expected, the one lady standing at the door of the little carriage, while the wrinkled countenance of the

other bent out from within. She saw Lady Betsinda give a great many nods of intelligence, and her heart burned within her with momentary fury. Often it happens that the worst of the pang of being found out is the revelation it makes to one's self. Lady Randolph meant no harm; not to introduce her nephew to Lucy would have been, in the circumstances, a thing impossible—and who could expect her to be responsible for anything that might follow? When an unmarried man meets a nice girl, there is never any telling what may happen. And Lucy was certainly a nice girl, notwithstanding her ignorance and simplicity, and her great fortune. To be sure, any connection of this kind would be a mésalliance for Tom; but even these were common incidents, and took place in the very highest circles. If this was fortune-hunting, then fortune-hunting was simple nature and no more. After a while the irritation died away. She sat down again and took up the book she had been reading when that committee of direction came in, and began

their sitting upon her and her concerns. Lady Randolph was about sixty, a large and ample woman with no pretence at juvenility ; but her eye was not dim, nor her natural force abated. There was only a small proportion of grey—just enough to give it an air of honest reality—in her abundant hair. As she sat and read a sentence or two, then paused and mused a little with the book closed over her hand, she recovered her composure. “ What good will it do *me* ? ” she asked herself triumphantly. Had she been seeking her own advantage her conduct might have been subject to blame ; but she was not seeking her own advantage. Should any marriage come to pass, it would deprive her, at one stroke, of all the comfort which Lucy’s allowance brought her. She would be giving up, not gaining anything. When this thought passed through her mind, it seemed a full answer to all possible objections, and she resumed her reading with the feeling that she had put every caviller to silence, and nobly justified herself to herself. What advantage would it be to me ?

the words twined themselves among those of the book she was reading, and appeared on every page more visible than the print. "What good would it do to me? I should suffer by it," she said.

While Lady Randolph was thus employed downstairs, Lucy and Jock were seated together at the window of the pretty little sitting-room, which had been so carefully prepared for the girl's comfort and pleasure. It was high up, but it had a pretty view over the gardens of the neighbouring square, where soon the trees would begin to bud and blossom, and where even now the birds began to hold colloquies and prelude, with little interrogative pipings and chirpings, till it should be time for better music—while in front, though at some distance down, was the cheerful London street, in which there was always variety to eyes accustomed to the Terrace at Farafield. They had not tired yet of its sights and sounds, or found it noisy, as Lady Randolph sometimes did. The house was situated in one of the streets leading out of Grosvenor

Square, and all sorts of things went past, wheel-barrows full of flowers, flowers in such quantities as they had never seen in the country, trades-people's carts of every description, German bands, all kinds of amusing things.

"Here is another organ," cried Jock, with excitement; and he added with a scream of delight, "it's got a monkey! and there is another little boy on a pony," the child added with a sigh, half of pleasure, half of envy. "What a long, lovely tail it has got! and here are two carriages coming, and a big van with a great picture outside. Did you think there were as many things in London, Lucy? There is something passing every minute, and every day."

"Oh, yes, I knew," said Lucy, with calm superiority, from the other end of the room. "I told you all about Madame Tussaud's, don't you remember, before you went there? I read all that book about London," she said, with modest pride.

"It isn't a book," said Jock, "it is only a guide. What a funny thing it is that you can

read that, and you don't care for stories, or histories either."

Then there was a little pause. The boy on the pony cantered away, the big furniture van with the landscape painted upon it lumbered along so slowly that its interest was more than exhausted, the carriages drew up at a house out of sight. There was a momentary lull, and Jock's interest flagged. He turned round, recalled to himself by this recollection of his favourite studies.

"Am I always to live here?" he asked, suddenly.

Now this was a question that had much troubled Lucy's mind; for, indeed, Jock had not been expected, and his presence somewhat disturbed the arrangements of Lady Randolph's household—while, on the other hand, Lucy had already given to her little brother the position which every woman gives to some male creature, and consulted his wishes with a servility which sometimes was ludicrously inappropriate, as in the present instance. She could not bring her-

self to hurt Jock's feelings by suggesting that it would be better for him to go to school, though this conviction had been gaining upon her as her own mind calmed, and the child himself recovered his spirits and courage. Lucy's heart began to beat a little faster when her little autocrat broached the question. She came up to him and began to stroke and smooth the limp locks, which would not be picturesque whatever was done to them.

"That is what vexes me a little, Jock; I don't know. You ought to be getting on with your education; and Lady Randolph is very kind; but she did not know you were coming—"

"Nor me either," said Jock, regardless of grammar. He had got over this painful uprooting of his little life, but even at eight such a disturbance of habits is not easily got over. There was no white rug to lie down upon, no old father always seated there to justify the strange existence of the child, and Lady Randolph, shocked by his indiscriminate reading,

had provided him with good little-boy books, which did not at all suit Jock. He mused a little, gazing down into the street, and then resumed. "Nor me either. I would like some other place; I would like you and me to stay always at home, as we used to do. I would like——"

Jock paused again, not very clear what it was that he would like; and Lucy looked vaguely over his head, waiting for the utterance of her oracle. Poor little oracle, for whom there was no certain and settled place! She stroked his hair softly, with infinite tenderness in her half-motherly, half-childish soul, to make him amends for this wrong which Providence had done him. She did not know what to suggest, nor what place to think of, but watched him to divine his wishes, as if he had been double, and not half her age.

"I would like," said Jock, some gleam of association recalling to him one fable among the many that filled his memory, "to be a giant like that one you told me the story about; you

never told me the end of that story, Lucy. I'd like to be able to go where I liked, and travel all over the world, and meet with black knights, and dwarfs, and armies marching—”

“There are no dwarfs nor giants nowadays,” said Lucy, “but you will be able to go where you like when you are a man.”

“It's so long to wait till you are a man,” said the child, peevishly. “I'd like you and me to go away together and nobody to stop us. I'd like to be cast away on a desert island,” he cried, with a sudden perception of paradise, “that's what I should like best of all.”

“But I don't think I should like it at all.”

“There!” he cried, “that is always how it is; you and me never like the same things. I suppose it is because you are a girl.” This Jock said more regretfully than contemptuously, for he was very fond of his sister; and then he added, with a little sigh, not of sorrow, but of resigned acceptance of a commonplace sort of

expedient, not absolutely good, but the best in the circumstances, "I suppose you had better send me to school."

## CHAPTER V.

## THE RUSSELLS.

“ THAT is just what I was thinking,” Lady Randolph said, “ we can do two things, Lucy, two benefits at once. I know just the place for little Jock, since he wants to go to school—with a poor lady whom you will like to help—and,” she added with a little softening of compassion, “ where you could go to see him often; and he could come—” this addition was less cordial. Lady Randolph was a woman too easily led away by her feelings. She thought of her committee, and restrained herself. “ Katie Russell must have told you about her mother. She has taken a house at Hampstead, or one of

those places, and is trying to set up a little school. We are all on the outlook for Indian children, or, indeed, pupils of any kind. Jock will be quite happy there. She will take an interest in him as your brother. I have got her address somewhere. Shall we go and look her up to-day?"

Lucy's eyes, before she replied, travelled anxiously to Jock's face to read that little chart of varying sentiment, and take her guidance from it. But Jock's face said nothing. He could not any longer lie on the hearth-rug, but he was doubled up in a corner by the fire, reading as usual, one of the books with which Lady Randolph had thought it proper to supply him—a proper little story about little boys, supposed to be adapted to the calibre of eight years old. Perhaps it was more fit for him than the '*History of the Plague*,' but he did not like it so well.

"I think—that would be very nice, Lady Randolph," said Lucy doubtfully.

"Well, my dear, we can but go and see.

Jock is too young to judge for himself; but he can come too, and tell you how he likes it. Mrs. Russell is very kind, I believe. She is, also, rather feeble, and does not know quite so well what she would be at as one could wish. She is always changing her plans. It may help to fix her if we take her a pupil. It is a great blessing," Lady Randolph said with a sigh, "when people know their own mind—especially poor people who have to be helped by their friends."

"I wonder," said Lucy, "if it is more difficult to be poor than to be rich."

"Oh, there can be little doubt about that—for women, at least. I am not in the least sorry for the butchers and bakers—they have their trade—or for our housemaids, which is the same thing; but you and I, Lucy. If anything were to happen, if we were to lose all our money, what should we do?"

"I should not be afraid," said Lucy quietly, "for you know I was born poor; but to have a great deal of money, and not know how to

employ it—that was always what papa said. He gave me a great many directions; but I don't know if I understood them, and sometimes I do not feel sure whether he understood. Life is different here and at the Terrace, Lady Randolph."

"Very different, my dear; but you need not bewilder your poor little head just yet. You will be older, you will have more experience before you have any occasion to trouble yourself about the employment of your money. I have no doubt all the investments are excellent—your father had a good business head."

"It was not about investments I was thinking," Lucy said. "I have no power over them."

"Nor over anything else, fortunately, at your present age," Lady Randolph said with a smile. "We may all be very thankful for that; for I fear, unless you are very unlike other girls, that you would throw a good deal of it away."

Lucy did not smile, or take any notice of this pleasantry. Her next remark was very serious. "Don't you think," she said, "that it

is very wrong for me to be so rich, when others are so poor?"

"A little Radical," cried Lady Randolph with a laugh. "Why, Lucy, I never thought a proper little woman like you would entertain such revolutionary sentiments."

"You see," said Lucy very gravely, "it is upon me the burden falls; every one feels most what is most hard upon themselves."

Lady Randolph laughed again, but this time with a puzzled air. "Hard upon you!" she said. "My dear, half the girls in England—and the men too—would give their heads to have half so much reason to complain."

"Men, perhaps, might understand better, Lady Randolph; but it is altogether very strange. Papa must have known a great deal better; but he did nothing himself. All that he wanted, so far as I can make out, was to make more and more money; and then left the use of it—the spending of it—to a girl that knows nothing. I never took much thought of this while he was living, but I feel very bewildered now."

"Wait a little," Lady Randolph said, "you will find it very easy after a while; and, when you marry, your husband will give you a great deal of assistance. In England you can never be at a loss in spending the largest income; and the more you have, the more satisfactorily you can spend it, the better return you have for your money. It is among us poor people that money is most unsatisfactory. It never brings so much as it ought," she said with that air of playfulness which, on such subjects, is the usual disguise for the most serious feeling. Lucy looked up at her with a gravity that disdained all disguise.

"But you do not mean to say, Lady Randolph, that *you* are poor?"

This question brought the colour to Lady Randolph's face. "You are very downright, my dear," she said, "but I will be honest too. Yes, Lucy, I am poor. The allowance that is made for you, is a great matter for me. Without that I should not have dreamt—my dear, you must not think I mean anything unkind—"

"Oh, no; you could not have cared for me even had I been nicer than I am," said Lucy, "for you had never seen me. Then I am rather glad it is so, Lady Randolph; but you should not give me so many things."

Lady Randolph laughed, but the moisture came into her eyes. "Lucy, I begin to think you are a darling," she said.

"Do you?" cried Lucy, with a warm flush which gave her face a certain beauty for a moment. "But I am afraid not," she said, shaking her head. "Nobody ever said that. I am glad—*very* glad that you think you will not mind having me; and it is very—*very* kind of you to do so much for me. But I should be quite as happy if you liked me, and did not buy so many things for me. Is it vulgar to say it? I am almost afraid it is. I never had anything half—not a tenth part so nice at the Terrace as you give me here."

"You were a little school-girl then, and now you are a young lady—a great heiress; and must begin to live as such people do."

Lucy shook her head again. "I am only me," she said with a smile, "all the same."

"Not quite the same; but to leave these perplexing subjects—what is to be done about your own studies, Lucy?"

"Must I have studies?" she asked with a tone of melancholy; then added sob missively. "Whatever you think best, Lady Randolph."

"My dear, you are far too good. I should like you to have a little will of your own."

"Oh, yes! I have a will of my own. If you please, I do not wish to have any more lessons. I will read books; but they all said I never would play very well, and I cannot draw at all. I can speak French a little, but it is very bad, and I have done about twenty German exercises," Lucy said with a shudder.

"Poor child! but I fear you must go on with these dreadful experiences. Perhaps a good German governess for a year—"

Lucy shuddered again. She thought of the Fräulein at the White House, with an inward prayer for deliverance. The Fräulein knew

everything, all her own business, and other people's special branches, even better than her own. Her very spectacles shone with knowledge.

"They cannot be *all* like each other," Lucy said, "and I will do whatever you like, Lady Randolph."

There was never a girl so docile and obedient. Lady Randolph almost regretted the absence of all struggle, till her eyes fell upon little Jock in the corner, holding his book somewhat languidly. Jock did not care for this correct literature; the last thing in the world that he had any acquaintance with was the doings of children at school.

"Do you like your story-book, Jock?"

"No," said Jock, concisely.

He let it drop from his hand; he did not even feel very deeply desirous of knowing what was the end.

"I am sorry for that; I hunted it up for you out of my old nursery. Nobody had touched the things for thirty years."

"It is very pretty—outside," Jock said, eyeing the gilding, "but I don't care much about little boys," he added, with dignity, "I don't know what it means."

"That is because you are so little, my dear."

"Oh, no, because I—don't understand it. I have read much nicer books; the 'History of the Plague,' that was what I liked best, better than 'Robinson Crusoe,' as good as the 'Pilgrim's Progress.'"

"How old-fashioned the child is," Lady Randolph said. "Will you come with us to see the school where Lucy wishes you to go?"

"Lucy did not wish it," said the boy, "it was me. I told her. I will go—because I suppose it is the right thing. You can't grow up to be a giant, or even a common man, without going to school. I do not like it at all, but it is the right thing to do."

"You are a wise little man," said Lady Randolph, "and do you think you may perhaps grow up a giant, Jock?"

"Not in tallness," Jock said.

He looked at her with something like contempt, and she was cowed in spite of herself. His very reticence impressed her, for he relapsed into silence, and gave no further explanation, not caring even to describe in what, if not in tallness, he expected to be a giant; and the two sat and looked at each other for a minute in silence. They looked very unlikely antagonists, but it was not the least important of the two who was most nervous. Lady Randolph felt as if it were she who was the inexperienced, the uninstructed one. She did not like to venture out of her depth again.

"Will you go and get your hat and come with us? You must be very kind to Lucy, and not worry her. You know she does not want you to leave her; but, also, you know, little Jock——"

Lady Randolph looked at him with a little alarm, feeling that his big eyes saw through and through her, and not knowing what weird insight might be in them, or what strange thing he might say.

But Jock's answer was to get up, and put away his book.

"I am going," he said.

It was the old lady who was afraid of him. She sat and watched him, and was glad when he was gone. Lucy was comprehensible and manageable, but the child dismayed and troubled her. Poor little forlorn boy! There was no home for him anywhere, no one to care for him but Lucy, who no doubt would form, as people say, "other ties."

It was a bright morning in March, the skies full of the beauty of Spring, the air fresh with showers, the sun shining; the buds were beginning to swell on the trees, and primroses coming out in the suburban gardens. Jock looked somewhat forlorn, all by himself, in the front seat of the carriage, buttoned closely into his great-coat, and looking smaller than ever as his delicate little face looked out from the thick collar; opposite to Lady Randolph's portly person, in her great furred mantle, he looked like a little waxen image; and he sat very stiffly, trying to

draw up his thin little legs beneath him, but now and then receiving a warning glance from Lucy, who was extremely nervous about his manners. They were both amused however by the long drive across London, and up the hill towards the northern suburbs. Lady Randolph did not know the way. She took almost as much interest as they did in the animated streets.

“Jock, little Jock, there is the heath. Do you see the big furze bushes?” she said. “How strange to see a place so wild, yet so near town!”

“It is not so good as our common,” Jock said. Yet school took a more smiling aspect after he had got a glimpse of the broken ground and wild vegetation.

They drew up at last after a troublesome search (for Lady Randolph’s coachman would not have betrayed any knowledge of that out of the way locality for worlds, it was as much as his reputation was worth), before a little new house, with a bay-window, and a small square

patch of green called a garden. Through the bay-window there was a dim appearance visible of some one seated at a table writing ; but when the carriage stopped there was evidently a great commotion in the house, and the dim figure disappeared. Some one hastily opening an upper window, a sound of bells rung, and of noisy footsteps running up and down the stairs, were all audible to the little party seated in the carriage, who were amused by all this pantomime.

“She will have a headache,” Lady Randolph said, “as soon as she sees us.”

Lucy, for her part, felt that to sit here at her ease and witness the flutter in the house, of excitement and expectation, was scarcely generous. She was relieved when the door opened. It wounded her to see the disdain of the footman, the scorn with which he contemplated the house, and the maid who came to the door ; all this penetrated her mind with a curious sense of familiarity. Mrs. Ford, too, would have been greatly excited had a pair of prancing horses drawn up before her

door, and a great lady in furs and velvet been seen about to enter ; and Lucy knew that she herself would have rushed out of the parlour, had she been sitting there, and would have been apt to fly to an upstairs window and peep out upon the unwonted visitor. She felt all this in the person of the others, to whom she was coming in the capacity of a great lady. She had never felt so humble or so insignificant as when she stepped out of the carriage, following Lady Randolph. Jock grasped at her hand as he jumped down. He clung to it with both his without saying a word. He did not feel at all sure that he was not now, this very moment, to be consigned to separation and banishment, and the new life of school for which he had offered himself as a victim. He contemplated that approaching fate with courage, with wide open, unwinking eyes, but all the same at the descent of Avernus, at the mouth of the pit, so to speak, clung to his only protector, his sole comforter. She stooped down and kissed him hurriedly as they crossed the little green.

"You shan't go if you do not like it, Jock."

"But I am going," said the child, with courage that was heroic; though he clung to her hand as if he never would let it go, all the same.

Mrs. Russell was a pretty, faded woman, with hair like Katie's, and the same blue eyes; but the mirth was out of them, and puckers of anxiety had come instead. She had put up her handkerchief to her forehead when Lucy entered the room. She had a headache, as Lady Randolph divined. There was a little flush of excitement upon her cheeks. When Lucy was introduced to her, she gave the girl a wistful look first, then made an anxious inspection of her, returning again and again, Lucy felt, to her face. Was not there in that look the inevitable contrast which it was so impossible to help making?

"Is this," she said, "the young lady Katie has written to me about?" she added, faltering, after a moment, "the dear young friend who

has been so kind to her?" and again she turned a questioning, wistful look upon Lucy, whose fate was so different.

"Indeed," said Lucy, "I could not be kind, I wish I could; but I like Katie very dearly, Mrs. Russell."

"Ah, my dear, if I may call you so," cried the poor woman with the headache, "that is the very sweetest thing you could say," but all the same her eyes kept questioning. What had the heiress come for? what had Lady Randolph come for? When visitors like these enter a very poor house, should not some pearls and diamonds fall from their lips, some little wells of comforting wealth spring up beneath their feet?

"How does the school go on?" said Lady Randolph, "that is the cause of our visit really. I heard of a little boy—but how does it go on? Did you settle about those Indian children?"

"Ah!" said Mrs. Russell, "there is nothing so hard to get as Indian children; they are the

prizes; if one can but get a good connection in that way, one's fortune is made; but there are so many that want them. It seems to me that there is nothing in all the world but a crowd of poor ladies fighting for pupils. It will be strange to you, Miss Trevor, to hear anyone talk like that," she added.

She could not help, it would seem, this reference to Lucy; a girl who was made of money, who could support dozens of families and never feel it. It was not that the poor lady wanted her money, but she could not help feeling a wistful wonder about her, a young creature whose fate was so different! When one is very poor, it is so natural to admire wealth, and so curious to see it, and watch its happy owners, if only to note in what way they differ. Lucy did not differ in any way, at which poor Mrs. Russell admired and wondered all the more.

"But you have some pupils?" Lady Randolph said.

"Yes, three in the house, and six who are day-scholars. Bertie tells me it is not such a

bad beginning. I tried for little boys, because there are so few, in comparison, that take little boys ; and Bertie teaches them Latin."

"I thought your son was to get a situation."

"Yes, indeed, but some one else got it instead ; one can hardly grudge it, when one knows how many poor young fellows there are with nothing. He is writing," Mrs. Russell said, with some pride.

"Writing!" Lady Randolph echoed with dismay, mingled with contempt. Their points of view were very different. To the mother, fortune seemed to be hovering, doubtful, yet very possible, over the feather of her boy's pen ; to the woman of the world, a little clerkship in an office would have been much more satisfactory. "You should not encourage him in that ; I fear it is not much better than idleness," Lady Randolph said, shaking her head.

"Idleness ! look at Mr. Trollope, and all those gentlemen ; it is a fine profession ! a noble profession !" said the poor lady, fervently ; but she

added with a sigh, “if he could only get an opening, that is the hard thing. If he only knew somebody! Bertie takes the Latin, and Mary the English, and I superintend, and give the music-lessons.”

“And you are getting on?”

The poor woman looked the rich woman (as she thought) in the face, with eyes that filled with tears. She could not answer in words before the strangers. She mutely and faintly shook her head, with a pathetic attempt at a smile.

Both Lucy and little Jock saw the silent communication, and divined it, perhaps, better than the elder lady. As for Lucy, her heart ached with sympathy, and a flood of sudden resolutions, intentions, took possession of her; but what could she do? She had to keep silent, holding Jock’s little hand fast, who stood by her knee.

“I thought you might perhaps have an opening for—the little boy I heard of. He is a delicate child, and peculiar; he would require

a great deal of special care. If you think you have time—”

“ Oh !” said Mrs. Russell, the pink flush deepening on her cheeks ; “ plenty of time ! And I think I may say for myself that I am very good with delicate children. I take an interest in them. I—you would like to see Bertie, perhaps, about the Latin ?” Mrs. Russell rang her bell hastily. She was feverishly anxious to conclude the bargain without loss of time. “ Will you tell Mr. Bertie I want him,” she said, going to the door, to anticipate the maid, who was not too anxious to reply. “ I am here, mother,” they heard, in a youthful bass—at no great distance—evidently the house was all in a stir of expectation. Mrs. Russell came back with a little nervous laugh. “ Bertie will be here directly,” she said ; “ I would ask you to step into the schoolroom, and see them, but the truth is they are all out for a walk. Mary has taken them to the heath. It is so good for them—and it was such a beautiful day—and my headache was particularly bad. When my headache is

very bad, the voices of the children drive me wild." Poor soul ! as soon as she had said this, she perceived that it was a thing inexpedient to say. But by this time the door had opened again, and introduced a new figure. He came in with his hands in his pockets, after the manner of young men. He, too, was like Katie ; but his face was cloudy, not so open as hers, and his features handsomer. He stood hesitating, his eyes going from one to another ; to Lucy first—was not that natural ? Then he straightened himself out, and took a hand from one of his pockets, and presented it to Lady Randolph. He was eager too, but with a suppressed bravado, as if anxious to show that he did not mean it, and was himself personally much at his ease.

" So this is Bertie !" said Lady Randolph. " What a long time it must be since I have seen him ! Why, you are a man now ; and what a comfort it must be to your mother to have you with her ! "

Mrs. Russell clasped her thin hands. " Yes, it

is a comfort!" she said. "What should I do if Bertie were away?"

Lucy was in the position of a spectator while all this was going on, and, though she was not a great observer, something jarred in this little scene, she could not tell what. She surprised a glance from the mother to the son, which did not chime in with her words, and Bertie himself did not respond with enthusiasm. "I don't know if I am a comfort," he said; "but here I am anyhow—and very glad to see an old friend."

"I hear you are coming out as a literary character, Bertie?"

"I am trying to write a little; it seems the best trade nowadays. I believe there are heaps of money to be made by it," he said, with that air of careless grandeur which is so delightful to the unsophisticated imagination; "and not much trouble. The only thing is to get one's hand in."

"That is what I was telling Lady Randolph," said his mother, her thin hands clasping and

unclasping ; "to get an opening—that is all you want."

"But you require to be very clever, Bertie," said Lady Randolph, gravely disapproving, "to make anything by writing. I have heard people say in society—"

"No," said the young man, "not at all, it is only a knack ; there is nothing that costs so little trouble. You want training for every other profession, but anybody can write. I think I know what I am about."

Then there was a momentary silence. Mrs. Russell looked at her son with wistful admiration, not unmixed with a furtive and painful doubt, while Lady Randolph contemplated him with a severity which was resentful, as if poor Bertie's pretensions did her, or anyone else, any harm. This pause, which was somewhat embarrassing, was broken by Jock, whose small voice, suddenly uplifted, startled them all.

"Is it stories he writes, Lucy ? I would like to learn to write stories. I think I will stay here," he said. But Jock was confused by the

attention attracted by his utterance, and the faces of all those grown up people turned towards him. "I can't write at all yet," he said, growing very red, planting himself firmly against Lucy, and facing the company, half apologetic, half defiant. Between pothooks and novels there is a difference ; but why should not the one branch of skill be learned as well as the other ? Jock knew no reason why.

## CHAPTER VI.

## POWER.

THIS visit made a turning point in Lucy's life. She returned home very thoughtful, more serious than usual—a result which seemed very easily comprehensible to her experienced friend. To part with her little brother was another trial for the girl; what wonder that it should bring back the grief that was still so fresh? Lucy said nothing about it; which was quite like her, for she was not a girl who made much show of her feelings. But it was not either her past sorrow, or the present "trial" of parting with Jock that moved Lucy—something else worked in her mind. The very sight of the poor

household with all its anxieties, the struggle for existence which was going on, the hopes most likely to produce nothing but disappointment, struck a new chord in her. She was more familiar with the level of common-place existence on which they were struggling to hold their place, than with the soft and costly completeness of life on Lady Randolph's lines. The outside aspect of the house had carried her back to the Terrace; the busied and somewhat agitated maid who opened the door, unaccustomed to such fine company, the flutter and flurry of expectation throughout the house, no one knowing who it was who had come, but all expecting some event out of the way—had made Lucy smile with sympathy, yet blush to think that such an insignificant personage as herself was the stranger received with so much excitement. So far Lucy knew and recognised the state of feeling in the house; but she had never known that struggle of poverty which was everywhere visible, and it went to her heart. This occupied all her thoughts as she went back; and when she got home she

disappeared into her own room for a long time, somewhat to the surprise of Lady Randolph, who, as so often happens, was specially disposed for her young companion's society. Lucy sent even Jock away. She dispatched him with Elizabeth, her maid, to buy something he would want before going to school; and bringing her little old-fashioned desk to her little sitting-room, sat down with it before the fire. It was a cold day, though bright, and Lucy thought, with pain that was almost personal, of the sputtering of the newly lighted fire in Mrs. Russell's cold drawing-room, and of all the signs of poverty about. Why should people be so different? She opened the desk, which was full of little relics of her girlhood; little rubbishy drawings which the other girls, at Mrs. Stone's, had done for her; and even little French exercises and virtuous essays of her own, all religiously put away. The desk was a very common little article, opening in two unequal divisions, so as to form a blue velvet slope on which to write; a thing much more adapted to be laid

out upon one of the little tables in the Terrace drawing-room than to have a place here, where everything was so much more refined.

But all Lucy's little secrets reposed under that blue velvet ; and in a drawer which shut with a spring, and was probably called secret, there was a packet of much more importance than Lucy's little souvenirs. She opened it with tremulous care. It was a bundle of memoranda in her father's hand-writing, done up with a bit of string as was his way. He had tied them up himself, directing her to read them over frequently. Lucy had never touched the sacred packet up to this moment ; her awe had been greater than her curiosity. Indeed, there had been little ground for curiosity, for she had heard him read, as they were written, all these scraps which were the studies for his great work of art, the will, into which old Mr. Trevor had concentrated his mind, and the meaning of his life. She had heard them, listening very dutifully ; but yet it was as if she had not heard at all, so lightly had they floated over her—so little had she thought of them. She

had been entirely acquainted with all his plans for her, and all the serious occupations he had planned out; but she had taken them calmly for granted, as things not affecting her for the moment. Now, however, quite suddenly, Lucy realised that she was not a helpless person, but powerful for aid and assistance to her fellow-creatures even now, young as she was. She gave but one glance, half smiling, to Maude Langton's drawings, and Lily Barrington's pin-cushion, and the pen-wiper made for her by Katie Russell ; then took out her little bundle of scrappy papers—the string of which she untied carefully and with difficulty, with a reverent thought of the old man whose withered fingers had drawn it so tight. It was with some difficulty that Lucy found, among the many memoranda in her bands, the one she sought. They were all embodied in the will. She found the stipulations about her residence, half in high-life, half in what Mr. Trevor called a middling way. And about her marriage, an event so distant and improbable, that Lucy smiled again in

maiden calm, wholly fancy free, as the word met her eye. At last here it was. She shut the others carefully into the desk, and began to read. And it was so remarkable a document that it will not be amiss if we give it here. This, as we have said, was but the memorandum, the rough draft, afterwards put into more formal language, in the will itself.

“The fortune which my daughter Lucy is to inherit, having been made by her uncle James Rainy, as may be said, out of nothing, that is to say, without any but the smallest bit of money to begin with, all by his own industry and clear-headedness—and very honestly made, though perhaps not without being to the detriment here and there of another person, not so clever as he was—it is my desire that his heiress should *give back* a part of it to her fellow-creatures, from whom it came. For, however honestly money is made, it is quite clear, to anybody that will examine the question, that if it is nothing more than buying in the cheapest market and selling

in the dearest, it must always be taking something off the comfort of other people. The best of men can't do less than this ; and I am sure James Rainy was one of the best of men. But as it came out of nothing, and out of the pockets of other people, I think it but right that James Rainy's niece should give it *back*. A part of it, that is to say ; I wish it clearly to be understood that the half of the Rainy property, whatever it may amount to when I die—and I hope I have been able to add a little by great attention to business, and giving up my whole thoughts to it—is to be kept intact, and not to be touched in any way, making a very good fortune for Lucy and her heirs for ever. But the other half she shall be free to dispose of, giving it back to the community, out of which it came. Foreigners are not to be eligible, though part of it was no doubt made out of foreigners ; but the kind that come fluttering about rich folks in England, and carrying off a great deal of our money, are not the kind among whom James Rainy made his fortune ; and I say again foreigners are not to be

eligible. Most people would say that having a great deal of money to give away, the thing to do would be to establish hospitals, and give large subscriptions ; but I don't believe in subscriptions for my part. Besides that is the common way. What I want Lucy to do, is to give the money to individuals or families whom she comes across, those that really want it. I wish her to remember that I don't tell her to do this in order to please herself, nor to make herself look like a great personage, nor to get applause or even gratitude. Applause she is not to get, since this part of my will I require to be kept secret as far as possible, and every gift to be kept an absolute secret from all but my executors, and the receivers of the bounty ; and gratitude she must not expect. It is a poor thing to look for it, and I don't much believe in it for my part. What she has to do is a simple duty, having a great deal more money than she can ever know what to do with. And she is not to give little dribbles of money which encourage pauperism ; but when she sees a necessity to give enough, liberally, and without grudging.

If it's to a man to set him up in business, or help him on in whatever his trade may be ; and if it's a woman, to give her an income that she can live on, and bring up her children upon, with economy and good management. I don't want anyone to get damage by what she gives, as happens when you give a ten pound note, or a fifty, or even a hundred. Let her give them enough—she has plenty to draw upon—according to their position and what they are used to ; capital that can be of real use in business, or an income that can be managed, and made the most of. It is giving the money back to those from whom it came. I also require that my daughter Lucy should be left the fullest liberty of choice. She must satisfy my executors that the case is a necessitous one ; but nothing more. She is not bound to give guarantees of any kind, or a good character even, or testimonials from other people. The thing is to be between herself and those she gives to. She will make many mistakes, but she is very sensible, and she will learn in time.

I further stipulate that my said daughter Lucy

is to enter upon the possession of this right as soon as I am dead, whether she is of age at that period or not. I expect of her obedience to all my rules for seven years, as far as regards herself; but in this particular she is to be perfectly free, and no one is to have any power of control over her—neither her guardians, nor her husband when she gets one. This is my last wish and desire.”

She had known vaguely that this was how it was; but when Lucy had heard the paper read by her father's own lips, she had not paid very much attention to it. It was so far away—so unlike anything that lay in her placid girlish life, which, at that time, had no power whatever in it, except to buy Jock a new book now and then out of her pocket-money. Lucy fancied she could see herself sitting quiet and unmoved over her knitting, listening as a matter of duty, not thinking much of what it was that papa wrote down in these interminable papers. How placidly she had taken it all! It had been nothing to

her ; though she had received from him a certain gravity of reflection, and sense of the incumbrances and responsibilities of her wealth, yet that had come chiefly since his death, and she recalled the easy calm of her own mind before that event with surprise. Now as she read these words over again, which had floated so calmly over her before, a thrill of warm life and excitement ran through her being. She had it in her power to change all that, to make poor Mrs. Russell comfortable, to lift her up above all necessity. Was it possible ? Lucy's heart began to beat, her mind trembled at the suggestion — it made her head giddy. That nervous, tremulous woman so full of self-betrayals, letting the spectators see against her will how anxious she was, how full of fear, even in professing herself to be full of hope. Was it possible that a word from Lucy would smooth away half of her incipient wrinkles, correct the anxious lines round the corners of her eyes, and calm her whole agitated being ? Lucy felt her head go round and round with that sense of delightful incom-

prehensible power. She could do it, there was no doubt or question ; and how willing she would be to do it, how glad, how eager ! She put her papers back again, with her whole frame tingling and in commotion. A girl is seldom so excited, except by something about a lover, some shadow of the new life coming over her, some revelation of the mysteries and sweetesses to come ; but Lucy had never been awakened on this subject. She knew nothing about love, and cared less, if that can be believed ; but the very breath was taken away from her, and her head made giddy by this sudden consciousness of power.

Next day Lucy had a visitor, in the morning, before there was any question of visitors, when she and Jock were seated alone. It was Mary Russell, with a little flush on her face, and somewhat breathless, who appeared behind the maid when the door opened. Mary was the plainest one of the family, a girl with a round cheerful face, and no special beauty of any kind, not like her handsome brother, who had the air of a man of fashion, or Katie, who was one

of the prettiest girls at Mrs. Stone's. It was not Mary's *rôle* to be pretty; she was the useful one of the family. In most cases there is one member of a household specially devoted to this part; and if it had happened that Mary had grown up beautiful, as sometimes happens, no doubt her claims would have been steadily ignored by the rest of the family, who thought of her in no such light. She was the one who did what the others did not like to do. She came in with a little hesitation, with a blush and shy air of deprecating anxiety. The blush deepened as she met Lucy's surprised look; she sat down with an awkwardness that was not natural to her. She was scarcely seventeen, younger than Lucy; but had already learned so much of the darker side of life. Yet there was in Mary none of the self-contrasts, nor the anxious adulation of her mother. She had so much to do, she had not time to think how much worse off she was than this other girl, her contemporary in life.

"I came to see—when it would suit you to

send—Master Trevor,” Mary said, faltering a little. “Mamma feared—that perhaps you might be discouraged by seeing that the house was not —— But I will see that he is very well taken care of, and—regular with his lessons. I am always with them. It is a holiday to-day, that is why I have come out.”

(The family had taken fright after Lucy had gone; they had doubted the possibility of so much good-fortune coming their way; they had trembled with apprehension lest a letter should reach them next morning informing them that some other school had been recommended to Lady Randolph, or that Miss Trevor feared that the air of the Heath would be too keen for her little brother; and Mary had as usual put herself in the breach. “I will go and find out,” she had said, “they cannot eat me, at the very worst.” This was Mary’s way; the rest of the house waited and fretted, and made all around them miserable, but she preferred to cut the knot.)

“You see, Miss Trevor,” she continued,

"mainma is very anxious to get a good connection. I do not care so much, for my part; but it is gentlemen's sons she wants, and she thinks that if we were known to have your brother——"

"But I am nobody," said Lucy, "and Jock is—— Papa was only a schoolmaster himself. He was not even a grand schoolmaster. He taught the common people; and I don't think that having Jock would make much difference."

Mary looked at her with wistful eyes.

"He is your brother," she said.

"But, indeed, indeed I am nobody," cried Lucy, "scarcely a lady at all, only allowed to live here, and be well thought of, because I have a great deal of money. I am not so good as you are; even Katie, though she was known to be poor, they said at school, 'She is one of the Russells.' Now that could never be said of me; I am not one of the anybodys," Lucy said, with a little smile. "I have nothing but my money," she added, eyeing Mary with great earnestness,

"it is good for something ; there are some things, indeed, that *it* can do," here she paused, and looked at the other girl again, very doubtfully, almost anxiously. Mary did not know what it meant. She had come as a suppliant, wistfully desirous of making a good impression upon the rich and fortunate heiress. Only to be connected in the most superficial way with this favourite of fortune would do them good, her mother thought. But she was deeply puzzled by Lucy's look at her, which was wistful too.

"Yes, there is a great deal that *it* can do," said Mary. "When one has so very, very much, it is as good as being born a princess. It is better to be of a good family when you have only a little, but when you are as rich as—as an 'Arabian Night,' what does it matter? Other boys would come from other prosperous places, if it were known that you had brought your brother."

"I wish," cried Lucy, "oh, I wish!—that I could do more than that."

Mary's cheeks grew crimson; she tried to laugh.

"That is all we want, Miss Trevor. We want only a good connection, and to get our school known."

In a moment the characters of the two girls had changed; it was the heiress that was the suppliant. She looked very anxiously in the other's eyes, who, on her side, understood somehow, though she knew nothing about it.

"We are getting on," said Mary, with that flush of generous pride and courage; "oh, I am not afraid we shall get on! There may be a struggle at the beginning; everybody has a struggle; but we have only got to stand firm, and not to give in. Mamma gets frightened, but I am not a bit frightened; besides, she is not strong, and when people are not strong everything tells upon them. Of course we shall have a struggle—how could it be otherwise—there are so many poor people in the world! but in the end all will come right; and, Miss Trevor," she added, with a little flush of excitement, "if you

don't think our house is good enough, never mind. We should like to know, but I don't wish to urge you, if you are not satisfied. We don't want any to come who is not satisfied; all the same we shall get on."

Lucy looked at her almost with envy.

"Yes," she said, shaking her head, following out her own thoughts, "I suppose it is true that there are a great many poor people in the world."

"Oh, so many!" Mary said; "poor women struggling and struggling to live; though we are struggling ourselves, it makes my heart sore; there are so many worse off than we are. But we must get on, whatever happens, I tell mamma so; what is the use of fretting, I say, all will come right in the end; but she cannot keep her heart up. It is because she is not strong," Mary said, a tear coming furtively to her eyes.

"I know what papa meant now," said Lucy. "I had never thought of it. It is a sin for one to have so much, and others nothing. If it

could only be taken and divided, and everybody made comfortable—so much to you, and so much to me, and everyone the same—how much better, how much happier! but how am I to do it?" she said, clasping her hands.

Mary stood, opening her blue eyes, then laughed, with youthful ease and frankness, though far from free of tears. "How strange that you should say that! I thought it was only poor people and Radicals that said that. You can't be a Radical, Miss Trevor? But it would be no good," said the sensible girl, shaking her head; "even I have seen enough to be sure of that. If we had all the same one day, there would be rich and poor again the next. It is in people's nature. But this is a long way off from what I came to ask you," she said, dropping her voice with a little sigh.

Jock had been in the room all the time. He was one of the children whom no one ever notices, who hear everything, and bide their time. He came forward all at once, startling Mary, who turned to him in alarm with a little cry.

"Are you fond of the 'Arabian Nights?' he said. "I am not so very fond of them now—they are for when you are quite little;—when you don't know anything. When I come, I will tell you quantities of things, if you like. I can tell you all Shakespeare. I told Lucy: she does not know much," Jock said with genial contempt.

"Perhaps you will think I don't know very much: but I shall teach you your lessons," said Mary with tremulous satisfaction, yet a little pedagogic assertion of her own superiority. Jock looked at her with attention, studying this new specimen of the human race.

"You must not think he is naughty," said Lucy, interposing eagerly. "He is a very good boy. Though he is so little, he knows a great deal. And he always understands. You may think he is a trouble with his stories, and the fairy books he has read. But he is no trouble," his sister cried, "he is the greatest comfort. I don't know what I should have done without Jock; and I am sure you will like him too. We

are going to get him his things this afternoon, and to-morrow I am to bring him," Lucy added in her usual tranquil tones.

"Then that is all right," said Mary. She thought it was all her doing—that the question had been a doubtful one, and that it was the decided step she had taken which had secured this important little scholar. He was to pay better than any of the rest, and he was, it might be hoped, the first of a better connection. Mary got up to go home with a satisfaction in her supposed success, which was almost triumph. She did not envy Lucy, though she was an heiress. She saw a long perspective of new boys filing before her, and a handsome house and big play-grounds, and an orderly prosperous establishment. These were the things that were worth wishing for, Mary Russell thought. As for Bertie and his book, she shrugged her youthful shoulders at them. But she believed in herself, and in the little boys to come. "We shall have a struggle," she repeated with a smile, "as everybody has; but we shall get on."

She did not envy Lucy ; but Lucy, perhaps, feeling the tables turned, was not so magnanimous. She was half vexed that the success of the Russells was so certain, and that here was no case for her to interfere. Alas, there was nothing for her to do, but to wring her hands and stand helpless upon her mountain of money, while all those poor people, whom Mary knew, struggled unaided—yet “got on” at last, without any help of hers.”

## CHAPTER VII.

## HOW THE RUSSELLS GOT ON.

LUCY was permitted to take Jock to Hamps-  
stead by herself in Lady Randolph's  
brougham next day. They had spent the morn-  
ing buying things for him, a schoolboy dressing-  
case, a little desk, various books, and an  
umbrella; possessions which, up to this time,  
had been considered too valuable for the child,  
of whom nobody took any special care. He went  
to his new home with such an abundance of  
property as elated even Jock, though he was  
not given to trivialities. He had a watch too,  
which was more than property, which was a  
kind of companion, a demi-living thing to con-

sole him when he should be dull; and the child bore up with great heroism in face of the inevitable parting. Indeed, Jock regarded the whole matter in an extremely practical common-sense way. Lucy herself was disposed to be tearful during the long drive. She held him close to her side, with her arm round him. “You will be good, Jock?” she said; “you will not be silly and read books, but do your lessons and your sums, and everything. Promise me that you will do your lessons, Jock.”

Jock eyed his sister with that indulgent contempt which her want of discrimination often produced in him. “Of course I will do my lessons,” he said; “it is you who are silly. What else should I go away for? People must do lessons, it appears, before they grow up. If I didn’t mean to do them,” Jock said, with a full sense of his own power of deciding his fate. “I should stay at home—I shouldn’t go.”

This silenced Lucy for the moment; but she was not so confident as he was. “When you get dull, dear, and when there is nobody to talk

to, and when you begin to feel lonely—" The tears got into Lucy's eyes again, as she added line after line to this picture ; "then I am afraid, I am afraid ! you will begin to read, you will forget about everything else."

Jock drew himself away from her arm with a little offence ; he looked at her severely. "I am not just a baby—or a girl ;" he said, indignantly. Then he added, softening, "And I don't mean to be dull. I will tell Mary a great deal. It will do her good. You don't mind so much about things, when you have a great many other things in your head."

Once more this oracular utterance silenced his sister for the moment ; and then with natural inconsistency she resented his philosophy. "I did not think you were so changeable. You are quite pleased to have Mary ; you don't care for leaving me. It is I that will be lonely, but you don't mind a bit!" cried Lucy. Jock sighed with the impatience which his elders so often show when a woman is unreasonable. "Don't you *want* me to learn my lessons then ?" he said.

But as this protest was uttered the carriage drew up before Mrs. Russell's house, where all was expectation, though there was no peeping at windows or signs of excitement, as on the first visit. The drawing-room, which was like poor Mrs. Russell herself, limp and crumpled with the wear and tear of life rather than old, had been rubbed and dusted into such a measure of brightness as was possible. There was a pot of crocuses at the window, and tea upon the table ; and the whole family were assembled to do honour to the visitor. There was nothing slipshod about Bertie now ; his hair was carefully brushed, all the details of his appearance anxiously cared for. "For who can tell what may happen ?" his mother said ; "we never know what an hour may bring forth ;" and inspired by this pious sentiment she had counselled Bertie, nothing loth, to buy himself a new necktie. His whole life might be altered by the becomingness of its tint and the success of its arrangement. Do not girls perpetually take these little precautions ? and why not young men too ? And they

all stood up to receive Lucy, and regarded her with a kind of admiring adoration. "Give Miss Trevor this chair—it is the most comfortable." "Mother, a little more cream for Miss Trevor, and some cake." They could not do too much for her. "Katie is so happy that we have seen you; she writes to me this morning, that all will go well with us now we know her dear, dear Lucy." "We have all known you by name so long," Bertie added; "it has been familiar in our mouths as household words." Lucy was abashed by all this homage; but how could she help being a little pleased too? Mary was the only one who did not chime in. "I suppose Katie thinks you lucky," she said; "I don't believe in luck myself." And then Lucy made a little timid diversion, by asking about Mr. Bertie's book. Was it finished yet? and would it soon be published? It is pleasant to be courted and applauded; but somewhat embarrassing when it goes too far.

"He has not got a publisher yet; is it not strange," cried Mrs. Russell, indignantly, "that,

whatever genius you may have, or however beautifully you may write, it is all nothing, nothing at all, without a publisher? He may be just an ignorant man, just a tradesman—not in the least able to understand; indeed I hear that they are dreadful people, and cheat you on every side (and authors are a great deal too generous and too heedless, Miss Trevor, they allow themselves to be cheated); but however beautiful your book may be (and Bertie's book is lovely) not one step can he move, not one thing can he do, till one of these common dreadful men—oh!" cried the indignant mother; "it is a disgrace to our age—it is a shame to the country—"

"They are necessary evils," said Bertie, with magnanimity; "we can't do without them. You must not think it quite so bad, Miss Trevor, as my mother says. And after all one is independent of them, as soon as one has got a hearing; *ce n'est que le premier pas*—"

"If Lady Randolph chose, she might easily get him an introduction," said Mrs. Russell; "but it is out of sight out of mind, Miss Trevor.

When you do not want anything, there are numbers of people ready to help you; but when you do—Lady Randolph might do it in a moment. It would not cost her anything; but she forgets; when you are out of the way everybody forgets."

"We must not say that, mother. It was she who brought us our celestial visitor."

"That is true, that is true," Mrs. Russell cried.

Lucy did not know what to think, or how to reply; she had never been called a celestial visitor before, and it was impossible not to be pleased by all this kindness and admiration. But then it was embarrassing, and she saw Mary in the background laugh. She felt half disposed to laugh too, and then to cry; but that was because she was parting with Jock, who, little monster, did not shed a tear. Lucy dried her own eyes almost indignantly; but even on her side the effect of the parting was broken by the assiduous attentions with which she was surrounded. She was so confused by having to take Bertie's arm, and thus being conducted to the door, and put

into the carriage, that she could not give Jock that last hug which she had intended. Mrs. Russell stood on the steps, and kissed her hand. “ You will come soon again, come as often as you can. You will do us all good, as well as the little brother ; ” Mrs. Russell said. And Bertie put his head into the carriage to tell her that he would come himself and bring her news of Jock. They both spoke, and looked as if Lucy were indeed a celestial visitor, a being of transcendent excellence and glory. She could not but be conscious of a bewildering sense of pleasure ; but she was ashamed of so much devotion. She was not the least worthy of it. Could they be laughing at her ? but why should anyone be so cruel as to do that ?

For the moment, however, all Lucy’s personal excitement in the consciousness of being able to change the circumstances of the poor lady, who had at first sight appealed so strongly to her sympathies, was subdued, and turned into the humiliation and shame of an officious person who has been offering unnecessary aid. She

shrank back into herself with a hot blush. Had she, perhaps, wanted to appear as a great benefactor in the eyes of the Russells? was it pride rather than pity? Lucy, though she had so little experience, was wise enough to know that undesired help is an insult, a thing that everybody resents. She was deeply disappointed and ashamed, not knowing how to excuse herself for her rash impulse of liberality, liberality which these high-spirited and hopeful people would most likely never have forgiven her for thinking of. She locked away her father's memoranda again in the secret drawer.

"Oh, papa! papa!" she said to herself, "how could you think it would be so easy?"

He had thought money was everything, but it was not what he thought. Lucy was glad that she had not written to Mr. Chervil about it, as she had intended, for most likely he would have laughed at her, or perhaps been angry. Evidently the only thing for her to do was to "read," as Lady Randolph advised her, and try to learn German, and keep as quiet as possible.

It was dull, very dull, without Jock, but Lucy was of a patient disposition, and reconciled herself gradually to her life.

On the whole however this life was a life full of pleasantness, to which the most exacting young person might easily have reconciled herself. Lady Randolph was very kind—indeed, as time went on, she got to like Lucy very sincerely, appreciating the good qualities of a girl who brought so much into the establishment and took so little out, who gave no trouble at all, as the servants said, rather despising her for it. But Lady Randolph did not despise her. She knew the value of a companion who was always contented, and aspired after no forbidden pleasures of society, and did not so much as understand the A B C of flirting. Such a girl was of rare occurrence in the world, or, at least, so persons of experience, accustomed to think the worst of all classes of their fellow-creatures, said. A girl who was always willing to do what she was told, and who set up no will of her own, and had no confidential visitor, except Mr.

Chervil, who was one of her legal guardians, was a charge with whom any chaperon might be pleased ; provided all went as well next year, when Lucy came out ! but Lady Randolph piously reflected that no one could tell what might happen before that. Lucy excited no strong feeling : there was little in her (except her fortune) to take hold of the imagination ; but her quiet presence was always soothing and pleasant. Lady Randolph professed to go little into society that season, " saving herself up," as she said, for the next, when it would be her more arduous duty to take Lucy out. But though she did not go out much, that did not prevent her from enjoying a great many dinner-parties, and even occasionally " looking in" upon some dear duchess's ball ; and Lucy spent many quiet evenings at home, in which her chief amusement was to hear the carriages of the people who were enjoying themselves roll up and down the street, and in wondering how she would like it next year, when she would be enjoying herself too. She did not at all dislike these quiet evenings,

and, on the whole, her life passed very pleasantly, as the Spring grew into Summer, and the season came to its prime. She rode in the morning, sometimes in the Park, when Lady Randolph could find suitable companions for her, and often going as far as Hampstead, where Mary Russell looked out upon her from the schoolroom window with cheerful friendliness ; and Bertie, not very sure of his skill, came out to put her on her horse when she was ready to go, and bit his young moustache with envy and anger against fate, which had denied him all such indulgences. Bertie, however, was buoyed up by a great confidence ; his book was going through the press : he had got the opening he wanted ; and presently, presently ! he said to himself, his time of humiliation would be over. Lucy had no idea of the effect of her visits upon the household. The little pupils, who were not very answerable to Mary's rule, hearing it often called in question, ran to the window when they heard the sound of the horses' feet, and they too looked with envy upon little Jock, who now had

a pony, and frequently went out with his sister. The little boys looked after Jock, some with admiring eyes, while others scowled at his unusual privileges.

“Why has that little beggar got a pony and us not?” the urchins would say, indignantly; and Mrs. Russell was not, with all her refinement, much better than the boy who said this, who was the son of the grocer, taken on reciprocal terms, and whose presence was felt to be a humiliation to the establishment. Mrs. Russell never saw Lucy ride away without drying her eyes.

“To think *my* girls should be toiling while old Trevor’s daughter——!” She looked out eagerly for Lucy’s coming, but this was the unfailing sentiment with which she greeted her. “The ways of Providence are inscrutable,” the poor lady said, “when I remember her mother, who was nothing but nursery-governess at the Brown-Jones’s, an old maid! when we used to call in mamma’s carriage.”

“If you were so much better off than her

mother, she has a right to be better off than we are ; it is only justice and fair-play," said Mary.

"Oh, child ! child ! hold your tongue ! what can you know about it ?" her mother said, with red eyes, while Bertie gnawed his moustache.

The young man stood and looked after Lucy, waiting to wave his hand to her as she turned the corner. She looked very well on horseback. If he had not felt that indignant envy of her, that sense that a trumpery bit of a girl had no right to be so much better off than he, he would have almost admired Lucy as she rode away. She was the representative of so many things that he did admire : wealth, luxurious ease, an undeniable superiority to all care. That she should be set up on that pinnacle, high enough to impress the whole world with her greatness, while he, clever, and handsome, and well born, attracted attention from nobody, was one of those things which are so incredible in their inappropriateness as to fill the less fortunate with indignant astonishment ; but presently, presently ! the young man said to himself. Meantime he was very irregular in

giving the little boys their Latin. The proofs took up a great deal of his time, and it was scarcely to be expected that a young author, on the verge of success and fame, could be as particular, in respect to hours, as a nameless pedagogue. Mrs. Russell fully felt the force of this argument. She did not see how Bertie could be expected to give himself up to the children every day. The Latin lessons came down to three times, then twice a week, and it was never quite certain when it might suit Mr. Russell to give them. "They shall have another half-hour with me at their music, or, Mary, give them a little more geography; geography is very important, of far more consequence, at their age, than Latin," the head of the establishment would say; and though the sight of Miss Trevor arriving on her fine horse, with her groom behind her, had a great effect upon the neighbourhood, and the parents of the day-scholars were pleased to think that their little boys were at the same school as this fine young lady's brother, yet after a while there were remonstrances from these common-

place people. The boys, they complained, did not "get on." "What do they mean by getting on? we are not bound to furnish intellects to our pupils," Mrs. Russell said, assuming something of the same imperiousness which answered with Mrs. Stone; but, alas! it did not answer at Hampstead, and but for the hope of that book which was coming out directly, the poor lady would have seen a very dismal prospect before her. But the book was to make amends for everything, it was to bring both money and peace.

"There is another boy gone;" said little Jock. "I'm very glad, he was one that laughed when you talked of anything. I told him about Macbeth, and he laughed. He's gone, that fellow; and Shuckwood's going—"

"They seem all to be going," said Lucy, alarmed.

"Oh no, you know there's me. I'm the sheet anchor, they say; but what is a sheet-anchor? She is often crying now," said Jock; "I can't tell why. It can't be because of the fellows leaving. They are a set of little—cads."

"Jock, where did you learn such words? you never spoke like that before."

"Oh, it is being with those fellows," said Jock. "If I were bigger I'd lick half of them; but I couldn't lick half," he added, reflectively, "for there's only five now, and when Shuckwood is gone, and the one with the red hair, there will be three. But then one is me! there will only be two others left. You know, Lucy, Russell, the man himself, Mary's brother, has made a book, and it's all in print."

"Yes, I know. I hope he will make some money by it, and make poor Mrs. Russell more happy."

"Money!" This was an idea Jock could not fathom; he pondered it for a time, but did not arrive at any clear comprehension of it. "Will he go and knock at all the doors, and sell it like—the milkman?" asked the child, with much doubt in his tone. The milkman was striding cheerfully along with his pails, uttering a mysterious but friendly howl at every door, and furnishing Jock with the simile. He thought the

milkman a very interesting person, but he did not realise Bertie Russell in the same trade. "I don't think he would do it," Jock said confidentially, "and if it was only one book, it would not be much good. I should like to be a pedlar with a heap of books; then you could read the rest, and sell them when you had finished them. But, Lucy," cried the child, "what I would like best of all would be to ride on, and on, and on, like this, and never stop, except at night, to lie on the grass and tell stories, like that book about the Knight and the Squire; and the Manciple. What is a manciple?" Jock asked, suddenly impressed by the charms of the unknown word.

"I can't tell in the least, I never heard of it. Jock, doesn't it vex poor Mrs. Russell when the boys go?"

"When the fellows leave? oh, I don't know. I tell you they're not much of fellows; I don't see why she should care," said the little ignoramus, serenely. "I wish they were all gone, then Mary would have time to improve her mind."

"Poor Mary! has she so much to do?"

"She is always having the fellows for something. When we have not Latin we have geography, and we don't often have Latin. Russell, he's busy, or he's got a headache. The fellows say——"

"What little gossips! Tell me what Latin you have learned, Jock."

"Oh, nothing at all. Penn-a, penn-ah—or perhaps it's penn-ah—penn-a, I never can remember. It is far easier just to say pen, as you do, Lucy. And then we have counting; two times three is six, three times three—— I'll tell you that another time; the pony jumps about when I try to do arithmetic in my head."

"But they are always very good to you, Jock? you are happy there?" this was the burden of all their talks, the constantly recurring chorus.

This time Jock, who usually said "Oh, yes," with great indifference to the question, laughed, which was rare with him.

"She says I am always to say Mr. Bertie is very kind," said Jock. "That's Russell, you

know; the fellows all call him Russell. She says, when you ask, I am to say he takes great pains with me."

Lucy was perplexed, but it was not right to show her perplexity, she thought.

"And does he?" she said.

"I don't know what it means, he never says anything at all. Do you think, if we were to ride long enough, we could ride, ride, right into the sun, Lucy? there where it touches the Heath, look! The sky *must* touch somewhere, if we could only ride as far."

"Let us try," said Lucy.

Jock's revelations were very unsatisfactory. It was just as sensible, she thought, to pursue the sunshine, and follow the point where the sky must touch, as to get any light thrown upon the one point which she was anxious to investigate. Lucy's mind had been greatly exercised upon this subject. It was impossible to mistake the signs of growing poverty and squalor in the house, and she, who felt that she had in her hand the power of turning anxiety and trouble

into ease, was greatly disturbed, not knowing what to do.

Mrs. Russell's eyes were generally red now; but then they were weak, she said; and the house got to look more and more untidy. It was a begrimed little maid who opened the door, and the red-haired boy was gone, and the one who squinted, and the little fellow with the curls. Lucy went in with her brother, when they had finished their ride, and was met by the mistress of the house, all tremulous, clasping and unclasping her hands, with a nervous smile.

"You must rest a little, Miss Trevor," she said, "after your long ride, and take something; won't you take something? I have made a little space in the drawing-room," she added, seeing, with the quick instinct of the unfortunate, that Lucy's eye had been caught by the big vacancy in the room, which had never been too full of furniture; "my poor piano, it was too big, much too big. I did not like to part with it, it was a relic of the days when—my rooms were not so small," she said, with a pretence at a smile.

“But you will be glad to hear, Miss Trevor, we have heard of a much better house, when—I mean as soon as—we are quite sure about the book.”

“It will not be long now?” said Lucy. “Mr. Bertie told me the printing was very nearly done.”

“No, it will not be long. We might take it now, for that matter, for I don’t entertain any doubt on the subject. But Bertie is always so modest. Bertie insists that we must make quite sure. You see, Miss Trevor, a work like his, a work of imagination, succeeds at once, if it is going to succeed,” she added, with a little laugh. “Other kinds of books may take a long time to gain the public ear, but that—one knows directly. So I say to Bertie, we really might venture. It is just round the corner, Miss Trevor, a much larger, handsomer house. But, on the other hand, this is a long way from the centre of everything. It might be better to move into Mayfair, or even Belgravia. He will want to be nearer the world. So, on the whole, we think it best to wait a little:

and it does not do to move in the season; everything is so dear."

"And the little boys?" said Lucy. Her mind was bewildered by the contrast between what she was hearing, and the visible signs of misery around.

"Oh," said Mrs. Russell, "as for Jock, you must not trouble yourself in the least. We are quite fond of him, he is such a little original. And Mary is very independent-minded; she will never take anything from her brother, though a better brother never existed! Mary will want something to occupy her, and so long as I have a roof over my head, little Jock shall never want a home. You may be quite easy on that point. I am telling Miss Trevor, Mary, that we are thinking of removing," she said, as her daughter came in.

Mary did not look in high spirits.

"Are you, mamma? I should not mind the house, if other things were comfortable," Mary said. Her eyes were heavy, as if she had been weeping, and she avoided Lucy's look.

"That is because some of the little boys are going away," said Mrs. Russell, nervously. "Mary is always so anxious. We shall be glad to be rid of them, my love, when Bertie's book is out."

Mary did not make any reply. She gave her shoulders an imperceptible shrug; and what between the daughter's unresponsiveness, and the mother's tearful and restless profusion of words, Lucy did not know what to say. When she went out, Bertie appeared with his hat on, and a packet of papers in his hand, and walked by her as she rode slowly along the steep little street. "These are the last of the proofs," he said to her, holding them up. "I am going to take them myself for luck. I hope you will think of me kindly, Miss Trevor, and wish me well."

"Indeed, I will. I wish it may be—the greatest success that ever was."

"Thanks, that should bring me good fortune. I want you to do me a favour too. Let me give it all the better chance by putting your happy

name upon it. I am sure it is a happy name, a lucky name, bringing good," he added fervently, "to all who invoke it."

"Indeed, Mr. Russell," said Lucy, troubled. "I do not know what you mean."

"I want," he said, "to dedicate it to you."

"To me!" Lucy's simple countenance grew crimson. She did not quite understand the half pleasure, half repugnance that seemed, all at once, to flood her veins to overflowing.. The colour rushed to her face. She was flattered, what girl would have been otherwise? But she was more embarrassed than flattered. "Oh, no! Mr. Russell, please not. It is too much, I have no right to such a compliment."

"Then I don't know who has," he said. "You sought us out when we were very low, and gave us courage. That was the thing we wanted most. My mother is not encouraging, Miss Trevor. She is very good; but she is so anxious —so easily cast down."

"She is in very great hopes now, Mr. Russell."

"Oh, yes! poor mother—too great. I don't

know what she thinks is coming. A fortune—a king's ransom. And she will be disappointed. I feel sure she will be disappointed—even if I succeed. I shall have to think of getting connections, forming friends, helping myself on in the world, instead of muddling always here."

Then there was a moment of silence, and the sound of the horse's hoofs on the stones came in, ringing in Lucy's ears. And these words raised up echoes of their own. Lucy's young soul got perplexed among them. But she said nothing, and after a moment he went on.

"Of course I will help them; but I must think of what is to be done next, and I must be in a place where I can see people—not out here. You are so reasonable, you will understand me, Miss Trevor. It is hard to be living among people who do not understand. I will bring you one of the first copies, if you will let me—the very first, if I have my way," he said, looking up at her with a glow on his face. As she sat on her horse, swaying a little with the movement, she looked the most desirable thing

in all the world to Bertie Russell. To think a girl the best thing you could become possessed of, the most valuable and precious, the highest prize to be aspired to, the creature who can bestow everything you most wish for—is not that being in love with her? If so, Bertie Russell was in love; and he looked at her as if he were so. Lucy's cheek was a little flushed with surprise, with the confusion of her thoughts, and he interpreted this so as to chime in with the excitement he had himself given way to. It was a genuine excitement. Heavens! if he could but win that girl to be his! what more would there be to wish for? He put out his hand and gently touched and stroked her horse's neck. This meant the most shy caress to herself, and Lucy felt it so, with a thrill of alarm she could not tell why.

"I am afraid I must go on now," she said, feeling a blush come over her face again; and he took off his hat, and stood watching as she quickened her pace along the road, calling after her, "I may come then, and bring the first

copy?" His heart jumped up [within him as he saw the colour on Lucy's face. Could she, in her turn, a simple girl not used to much attention, have fallen in love? If so, there would be nothing strange in that. A fine young fellow —a young man of genius about to blaze upon the world. Nothing could be more natural; but the idea made Bertie's heart beat. It would be the most fortunate—the most desirable of all things? It opened up a perfect heaven of hope and blessedness before his feet.

As for Lucy, she rode home with her heart quaking and trembling and full of many thoughts. She did not entertain any doubt of the success of the book, any more than the author of it did, or his mother. But what she had heard from both sides opened Lucy's eyes. Poor Mrs. Russell! what wild fancy possessed her, making her so feverishly confident in the midst of all those signs of trouble? Youth is intolerant, yet Lucy was reasonable. She saw some excuse for Bertie too. And now her duty seemed to her very clear. After all her vicissitudes of feeling, she had

come back to the starting point. This made her heart beat, not any thought of the handsome young author. She would have to tell Mrs. Russell herself of what she was about to do. It would be a difficult mission, Lucy thought to herself with something of a panic; yet it must be done. And when she thought of the house over which such a cloud of trouble and anxiety and approaching ruin seemed to hang, and of Mrs. Russell's excitement, and Mary's pale cheeks, her heart smote her for delaying. She must not allow her guardian to hold her hand, or her own timid spirit to shrink from her work. Would it not be better to have it done before the moment came when this poor woman would be undeceived? While she rode back through the suburban roads, Bertie subduing his pride, took the aid of an omnibus, and made his way to the publisher's—his head in the air, his mind full of ecstatic visions. He composed a hundred dedications as he rolled and rumbled along, smiling to himself at the idea of the author of "Imogen" being seen on an omnibus. "Why not?" he

asked himself. A man of genius, a future lord of society and the age, may go where he will without derogating from his dignity. If all went well, if all went as every indication proved it to be going, other vehicles than omnibuses were waiting for Bertie, golden chariots, cars of triumph. His present humility was a pleasantry at which he could not choose but smile.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE DEDICATION.

A VERY short time after this Lucy received the parcel of books which had been promised her. The season was growing to its height, and no time had been lost in putting the three volumes into the flimsy cloth binding which places the English novel on a platform of respectability, elevated far above its contemporary of other nations. The author did not bring her the first copy with his own hands, as he had vowed to do. Bertie had been afraid—he had done a thing which was perhaps too daring, and he did not venture to appear in his own person, to meet (perhaps) the storm of Lady Randolph's

displeasure, perhaps the alarmed reproachfulness of Lucy herself. He sent it instead, and awaited the reply with a heart which could scarcely beat higher with any personal excitement, than it did with the tumult of hope and fear with which he awaited the issue of his first publication. It seemed to the inexperienced young fellow that the issues of life and death were in it, and that his fate would be fixed one way or another, and that without remedy. His doubt of Lucy's reception of his offering, therefore, added but a slight element the more to a tumult of feeling already almost too great to be controlled. He brought it himself to the door, but would not go in; leaving a message that the parcel was to be given to Miss Trevor at once. Lady Randolph and she, for a wonder, were dining alone, and the parcel was undone when the dessert was placed on the table, and lay there in a very fashionably artistic binding, of no particular colour, with "Imogen" scrawled in large uneven letters on the side. The ladies both took it up with great interest. A new book, though so many of the community have ceased to

regard it as anything but a bore, is still interesting more or less to every little feminine circle that knows the author. Lady Randolph was going out to a succession of parties after dinner, and among them to a great intellectual gathering, where all the wits were to be assembled. "I must tell Mrs. Montague about it," she said; "I must speak to everybody about it. It is very attentive of the young man to send it at once. We must do what we can for him, Lucy. We must ask for it at all the libraries, and tell everybody to ask for it, and I will speak to the critics. I will speak to Cecilia;" she said, taking up the first volume. But after a momentary interval, a change came over Lady Randolph's face. She uttered the invariable English monosyllable "Oh!" in startled and troubled tones; then turned upon her companion, hastily,

"Did you know of this, Lucy? My dear, my dear, how wrong! how imprudent! Why did not you mention it to me?"

Lucy was eating her strawberries very quietly, looking with a pleased expectation at the two

other volumes of the book. It seemed to her a fine thing to be an author, to have actually written all that; and she was a little proud in her own person of knowing all about him, and felt that she would now have something to talk about when Lady Randolph's visitors tried her, as they were in the habit of doing, on divers subjects. When they talked to her about Lady Mary's small and early party, or the Duchess's great assembly, Lucy had often found it embarrassing to repeat her humble confessions of ignorance to one after another, and to admit that she had not been there, or there; and did not understand the allusions which were being made; and she did not know enough about music to speak of the opera, nor about pictures to prattle about the exhibitions, as she heard other girls do; but now she would have something to say: "Have you seen the new novel? It is written by a gentleman we know;" with that to talk about Lucy felt that she might even take the initiative, and *begin* the conversation with anyone who did not look very clever and alarming, and this gave her a serene

satisfaction. Also she was to spend the evening all by herself, and a new story was a nice companion. She was aroused from these agreeable thoughts by that “Oh-h!” uttered upon two or three notes by Lady Randolph, and looked up to see her friend’s countenance entirely changed, severe as she had never seen it before. “Did you know of this? Why did you not mention it to me?” Lady Randolph said. She was holding out the book for Lucy’s inspection, and the girl looked at it with instinctive alarm, yet all the calm of innocence. This was what she read:—

*To the Angel of Hope,*

LUCY,

*to whose name in reverence*

*I prefix no title.*

*This first effort of a mind  
which her gentle encouragement  
has inspired with confidence  
is Inscribed.*

Lucy’s eyes grew round with amazement, her lips dropped apart with consternation. She

looked from the book to Lady Randolph and then to the book again. After a moment, the colour rushed to her face. “Lucy!” “Oh, you do not suppose he means *me*,” she said, aghast.

“Whom could he mean else? Did you know anything about it? Lucy, don’t let me think I am deceived in you,” Lady Randolph said, with great vehemence. She was more excited than seemed necessary; but then, no doubt, she had a very serious sense of responsibility, in regard to a ward so precious.

“I am very sorry,” said Lucy; “I suppose I do know; he said he would dedicate the book to me, and I said, oh no—don’t do that; but then we spoke of something else, and I thought of it no more.”

After a while Lady Randolph found herself capable of smiling, when she was fully convinced of the girl’s innocence. “What a good thing you are not *out*, my dear. I can’t be sufficiently thankful you are not out. You see by this, Lucy, what a dangerous thing it is to be kind to anybody. You, with your prospects, cannot be

sufficiently careful. Have you ever thought that you are different from other girls? that there are reasons why I must take a great deal more care of you? I, who think girls ought always to be taken care of;” Lady Randolph said.

“I know that I have a great deal of money,” said Lucy, quietly. “I suppose, Lady Randolph, that is what you mean?”

“My dear, if it were only in novels, you must have read that girls who have great fortunes are run after by all sorts of unworthy people; and innocent girls like you are apt to be deceived when people are civil. Lucy, my love, this is a great deal too broad a compliment,” said Lady Randolph, very solemnly, laying her hand upon the book; “you must not be taken in. No man who really cared for you, no *nice* man, would have held you up to the notice of society in this way.”

“Cared for me?” said Lucy; “but I never supposed he did that. Why should he care for me?”

Lady Randolph looked at her charge with great perplexity of mind. Was this innocence,

or was such simplicity credible? Had the girl never heard of fortune-hunters? All girls in society were aware of the dangers which attended an heiress; but Lucy had not been brought up in society. She did not know what to think; finally however, she determined that it was better, if they did not already exist there, to put no such ideas into the head of her *ingénue*. For Lady Randolph, who had no clue to the graver cares which occupied Lucy's mind, had not thought of her, as yet, in any character except that of *ingénue*. She stopped herself in the half completed sentence which she had began before this reflection came to her aid. "He must want you to think he cares—it is a beginning of —" Here she stopped; and laughed uneasily. "No, no, I daresay I am wrong. It is my over-anxiety. Let us say it is only an indiscretion. Young men are always doing things which are *gauche* and inappropriate. And you have so much good sense, Lucy —" Lady Randolph got up and came behind Lucy's chair, and gave her a hasty kiss. "I have perfect con-

fidence in your good sense. You will not let your head be turned by fine words, as so many girls do?"

Lucy looked up with surprise at the haste and almost agitated impulse of her careful guardian. Lady Randolph was dressed for her parties in black velvet and lace, with the *rivière* of diamonds which Lucy admired. She was a stately personage, imposing to behold; and yet, as she stood, somewhat excited, anxious and deprecating by the side of the little fair-haired girl in her black frock, Lucy felt a conviction of her own superior importance which was painful and humiliating to her. The uneasy sparkle in the eye, the glance of anxiety in the face of the lady, who in every natural point of view, was so much above herself, made her unhappy. How much money can do! Was it this, and this only which disturbed the balance between them, and made Lady Randolph's profession of faith in her sound as apologetic? She rose to follow upstairs with a confused sensation of pain. She had been trained, indeed, to think her fortune

the chief thing in the world ; but not in this point of view. The drawing-room was dim and cool, the windows all open, the night air blowing in over the boxes of mignonette and geranium in the balconies. The sounds from without came softened through the soft air, but yet furnished a distant hum of life, an intimation of the great world around, the mass of human cares and troubles and enjoyments which were in full career. Lady Randolph placed Lucy in her own chair by the little table with the reading lamp, and gave her Bertie's book with a smile. "No, I don't think it will turn your head," she said, "read it, my love, and you will tell me to-morrow what you think of it. How I wish I could take you with me ! and how much more I shall enjoy going out next year when you are able to go with me, Lucy !" She gave her another kiss with a little nervous enthusiasm, and left the girl seated there in the silence with many wonderings in her mind. Lucy sat and listened with the novel in her hand while the carriage came to the door, and Lady Randolph drove away.

Other carriages passed, drew up in the street below, took up and set down other fine people going here and there into the sparkling crowds of society. Many an evening before, Lucy had stolen behind the curtain to watch them with a country-girl's curiosity, pleased even to see the billowing train visible through a carriage window, which betrayed the fine evening toilettes within. But this evening she did not move from her chair. There was so little light in the room that the windows mysteriously veiled in filmy drapery added something from the dim skies outside to the twilight within. A shaded lamp stood in the back drawing-room, making one spot of brightness on a table. Her reading-lamp, with its green shade, condensed all the light it gave upon her hand with the book in it, resting upon her knee. But her face was in the darkness, and so were her thoughts. She was not so angry with Bertie as Lady Randolph had been, for his dedication. It was intended to be kind—what could it be but kind? Perhaps he had divined the attitude which, in intention

at least, she had taken towards his family. Lucy's thoughts had never turned the way of love-making. She had not as yet encountered anyone who had touched her youthful fancy. It was no virtue on her part—she sat like one on the edge of the stream musing before she put her foot into the boat which might lead her—whither? But, in the meantime, the thoughts in her heart were all serious. Was she not pausing too long, lingering unduly upon the margin of her life—not doing the work which had been put into her hands to do?

Lucy had got so deep in these thoughts that she did not hear the noise and jar with which a hansom cab came to the door—or, at least, hearing it, paid no attention; for it is very difficult to discriminate in a street, whether a carriage is stopping at number ten or number eleven, and hansom cabs were not commonly heard at Lady Randolph's at night. Even the movement in the house did not rouse her; she had not the ease of a child in the family, though she was of so much importance in the house. She sat

quite still, feeling by turns a refreshing breath steal over her from the windows, watching the flutter of the curtains, and the glimmer of the stars, which she could see through them, through the upper panes of the long windows ; and vaguely amused by the suggestion furnished to her mind by the passing carriages, the consciousness of Society behind. She was so well entertained by this, and by her own thoughts which were many, that she had scarcely opened the book. She held it in her hand ; she had looked again at the Dedication, feeling half flattered, half annoyed ; and had read a page or two. Then, more interested, as yet, in her own story, or in this pause, so full of meaning and suggestion before it began, had closed again upon her fingers the new novel. Could anything in it be so wonderful as her own position ; so full of that vague questioning which, in Lucy's mind, was more a state than a query. She dallied with the book, feeling herself a more present and a more important heroine than any imaginary Imogen.

Lucy did not even hear the door open. It was opened very quietly far away in the dimness, at the other end of the room, and the new arrival stood looking in for, at least, a minute before he could make out whether any one was there. There was no light to show his own figure in the dark doorway, and he saw nothing except the lamp in the first room and the smaller one with its green shade, by which Lucy in her black dress was almost invisible. He paused for a minute, for he had been told that there was some one there. Then, with a bold step, he came in and closed the door audibly behind him. "Nobody, by Jove!" he said, an asseveration quite unnecessary; then threw himself into a chair, which stood in front of the table on which was the larger lamp. The sensation with which Lucy woke up to the discovery that a stranger, a *gentleman!* had come into the room, not seeing her, any more than till the moment when he became audible she had seen him, was one of the most extraordinary she had ever experienced. She raised herself bolt upright in her chair, half in alarm; but

Lady Randolph's chairs, it need scarcely be said, did not creak, and Lucy's dress was soft with no rustle in it. "Nobody, by Jove!" the individual said; and nothing contradicted him. It seemed to Lucy that she instantly heard her own breathing, the beating of her watch, her foot upon the footstool, as she seemed to hear in exaggerated roundness and largeness of sound the *thud* with which he threw himself into that chair, the movement with which he drew it to the table, the grab he made across the table at a newspaper that lay there. "Well! here's the news at all events," the stranger said. As he stooped over the newspaper, his head came within the circle of the lamp. Lucy scarcely dared to turn hers to look at him. There was the outline of a head, a mass of hair, a large well-defined nose, a couple of large hands grasping the paper. Lucy's first impulse was half, but only half-alarm; but she was not at all nervous, and speedily reminded herself that it was very unlikely any dangerous or unlawful stranger should be able thus to make his way past Robinson, the

butler, and George, the page, into Lady Randolph's drawing-room. There could not be anything to fear in him ; but who was he, and how came he there ? And what was Lucy to do ? She sat as still as a mouse in Lady Randolph's chair and watched. Was it quite honourable to watch a man who was not aware of your presence ? But then how to get away ? Lucy did not know what to do. She felt more disposed to laugh than anything else ; but dared not. Perhaps after a while he would go away. She held her breath and sat as still as a mouse. A *gentleman !* utterly unknown and appearing so suddenly in a feminine house—it was embarrassing ; but certainly it was rather amusing too.

The stranger was not a quiet gentleman, whatever else he might be. How he pushed his chair about ! how he flung the paper from one side to another ! turning it over with resounding hums and hems ! How could anyone be so noisy ? Lucy, who was afraid to stir, watched him, ever more and more amused. At last he tossed the

paper back upon the table. "News! not a scrap?" he said to himself, and suddenly throwing a large pair of arms over his head, gave such a yawn as shook the fragile London house. Did Lucy laugh? She feared that the smallest ghost of a giggle did burst from her in spite of herself. It seemed to have caught his ear. He suddenly squared himself up, turned his chair round, and put on an aspect of listening. Lucy held her breath; he turned straight towards her and stared into the dimness. "By Jove!" he said again, to himself. The soft maze of curtains fluttered, the night air blew in. No doubt he thought it was these accidental sounds that had deceived him. But suspicion had evidently been roused in his mind. After a minute he rose, a large figure, making the house creak, and cautiously approached the window. He passed Lucy, who had shrunk back into her chair, and went beyond her to look out. One or two carriages were rolling along the street, and Lucy felt this was her opportunity, the way of retreat being now clear. She got up softly, with

the utmost precaution, while he stood with his back to her, then turned to flee.

Alas ! Lucy's calculations failed her ; her foot caught the footstool, her book fell out of her hand with a noise that sounded like an earthquake, the stranger turned upon her as quick as lightning : and there she stood, blushing, laughing, confused, prettier than Lucy Trevor had ever looked in her life before.

“Oh, I beg your pardon!” she cried ; and he said “By Jove!” taking out of his pockets the hands which had been thrust down to their depths.

“It is I who ought to beg your pardon,” he said. “I am afraid I have frightened you. Robinson told me I should find—some one here ; but the room seemed empty. I hope you will begin our acquaintance by giving me your forgiveness. I am Tom Randolph, the nephew of the house.”

“Thank you,” said Lucy, regaining her composure and seriousness, “and I am Lucy Trevor, whom Lady Randolph is so kind as to take care

of. It is I who ought to apologize, for I saw you—I saw you directly : but I did not know what to do.”

“ You must have thought it very alarming, a savage like myself coming in and taking possession. I am much obliged to you for taking it so quietly. My aunt is out, I hear. I wonder, when she has you to bear her company, Miss Trevor, that, now and then, she can’t make up her mind to stay at home.”

“ Oh, but society has claims,” said Lucy, repeating the words she had heard so often with matter-of-fact and quite believing simplicity. To her horror and surprise the new-comer replied with a laugh,

“ We have all heard that, and let us hope, Miss Trevor, that the votaries of society are rewarded for their devotions. You don’t share the *culte*? ” he said.

“ I ! I am not *out*; and, besides, I am in mourning,” said Lucy, looking at her crape.

“ I beg your pardon ; won’t you take your seat again, and let me feel my sins forgiven ? Did I

interrupt your reading? A new novel is much more interesting than an old—or, let us say, a middle-aged savage.”

Sir Thomas Randolph saw Lucy look at him when he said this; already did she want to make sure that the savage was not more than middle-aged? He thought so, and he was satisfied.

“It is not that I care for the novel; I had not begun it yet. It is written,” said Lucy, trying her new subject, “by a—gentleman we know; but, perhaps, as you have just come home, you may want dinner, or something, Mr.—I mean Sir Thomas?”

“You have heard of me, I see.”

“Oh, yes; Lady Randolph so often speaks of you; but I am not much used to people with titles,” Lucy said.

“Do you call mine a title? not much of that. We are commoners, you know: and I hear that whenever there is anything very wicked wanted in a novel, it is always found in a baronet; that is hard upon us, Miss Trevor. I

wonder if there is a wicked baronet in the novel you have got there."

"I have not read it yet—it is written," said Lucy, hesitating, "by a gentleman we know. Lady Randolph is going to speak to everybody about it, and we hope it will be very successful."

Lucy could not keep herself from showing a little consciousness. He took it up, and she was very much alarmed lest he should see the dedication. She had never thought it would affect her, yet here, already, she had quite entered into Lady Randolph's feelings. Fortunately he did not see it, though he turned over the volume in his large hands. He was large all over, as different as it was possible to conceive from Bertie, who was slight and dainty, almost like a girl. Lucy was not sure that she had ever seen a man before so near, or spoken to one of this kind. He was so unlike the other people of her acquaintance that she could not help giving curious looks at him under the shade of the lamp. He did not keep still for a moment, but threw his bigness about so that it filled the room, some-

times getting up and walking up and down, taking up the chairs as if they were toys. He was a creature of a new species. She did not feel towards him as Miranda did to Ferdinand, who was probably an elegant stripling of the Bertie kind, but she was interested in the new being, who was not beautiful. He was so unlike anything she had seen before.

## CHAPTER IX.

SIR TOM.

THE days that followed were full of this big person. Lucy found his company so pleasant that she lingered, to her own great consternation, talking to him, till Lady Randolph returned; no, not talking very much to him; but yet telling him various things about herself, which she was greatly surprised to recollect afterwards, and hearing him talk, which he did with a frankness and freedom equally unusual to her. When she heard Lady Randolph's brougham draw up at the door, Lucy fairly jumped from her chair in alarm and wonder. What would Lady Randolph say?—would she be angry? A sentiment of

honour alone kept her from running away: and her look of innocent panic greatly amused Sir Tom.

“Are you afraid?” he said, with that great but harmonious laugh, which softly shook the house. “Is she so hard upon you? Never mind, she is fond of me, though you would not think it, and there will be a general amnesty to-night.”

“Oh, I am not afraid,” Lucy said, with a smile. But she said to herself, what will Lady Randolph think? the dedication first, and now to sit up and chatter to a gentleman! But Lady Randolph’s voice had never been so soft, nor her countenance so genial. She was so glad to see “Tom,” that she saw every thing in the most favourable light. At least, this was the interpretation Lucy put upon her cloudless graciousness.

“Don’t hurry away,” she said; “or Tom will think you are glad to escape now your post of entertainer is over;” and she kissed Lucy with a warm, natural tenderness which went to the girl’s heart. She went upstairs, indeed alto-

gether in a state of unusual and pleasant commotion. She had never met anybody in her life like Sir Tom. He told her of a hundred places he had been at, of his long journeys, and acquaintance with all sorts of things and people; bringing in the wide atmosphere of a big world into the four walls, which was all the sphere Lucy knew. How pleasant it was! It had stirred her altogether, with curiosity and interest, and amusement and admiration, yet with the amiable derision of a tidy, orderly girl, for the man's faculty of disarranging everything, which made the balance a little more even. He had seen every kind of wonder; but he could not sit down in a chair without ruffling up all its cover, and hooking on its ornaments to his buttons. This made her laugh, and disposed her to take care of Sir Tom, and pilot him to safe chairs, on which there were no antimacassars. She had felt perfectly at her ease with him, almost more than with Mr. Rushton, for instance, whom she had known at home, and the little agitation of his arrival, and the novelty of him

generally, drove all her other ideas out of Lucy's head. After she had gone to bed even, she could not but smile in the darkness, to hear his big step coming up-stairs, and his cheerful good-night to his aunt, which sounded up and down the narrow London staircase, so that everybody in the house shared it. "Good night, Sir Tom," Lucy said, within herself; and laughed. The house felt more safe, better taken care of, with this new-comer in it. It was enlivening to think that he would be there in the morning, with his cheery voice. "Provided he does not upset the house," Lucy said to herself. She had not been aware that she had so much love of fun in her. As for Lady Randolph, she was glad to see Sir Tom. He was all she had to represent her family, and she was as fond of him as a mother. Perhaps the relationship of aunt made her accept his roving and lawlessness with more composure than a mother would have done; and they were the best friends in the world. When Lucy left the drawing-room, Lady Randolph gave her nephew a keen and anxious look; but it was not till some

time after that the new inmate was talked of. Then it was Sir Tom himself who opened the subject.

"That is a jolly little girl you've got."

"Oh, Tom!" his aunt cried, throwing all her breath into that exclamation; "I am so glad to hear you say so."

He laughed. "Do you suppose I am thinking of ulterior steps?" he said; "but I like her. She *is* a jolly little girl."

And Lady Randolph, too, went to bed very happy, thinking Sir Tom's big "good-night," as it went booming up the staircase as pleasant as any music. Her heart swelled, as with the most generous of sentiments; she thought if she could but see the old Hall revived by new money, the rich new life-blood of gold untold, such as would soon be in Lucy's possession, poured into the family veins, she thought she would die happy. And what could Lucy's dearest friend desire better for her? Mrs. Russell, poor lady, thought the same thing of her son.

And next day, and for some days after, the house was like a new place. He went and came,

out to his clubs, to the world outside, and back again, bringing news, public and private, bringing the breath of the general existence, in a manner entirely novel to Lucy. She had heard a great many stories of contemporary life in Lady Randolph's drawing-room before, scraps of politics, which she paid no attention to, and tales of this one and the other, whom she did not know or care for; but whether it was something in the personality of Sir Tom, or that he told these stories better, or that the larger life which he brought into the house, harmonised them, and gave them a human attraction, it would be hard to say; but it is certain that they assumed a totally different character to Lucy. Somehow they did not seem gossip from his lips. Lady Betsinda suggested scandal in every line of her eager old face; but who could call that gossip which fell from the bearded lips of the good-natured adventurer, the man who had friends everywhere, among American Indians and African savages, as well as in the clubs. It is impossible to tell what a difference he made in the house,

his very step on the stair brought variety, change, a difference, a relief from monotony, to which no one could remain insensible. The river of life had flowed slowly, partially frostbound by chills to come in Lady Randolph's veins, and not loosed from the spring icicles in Lucy's; but when this torrent of full existence, warm and mature, came in, the stream was at once in flood, neither partial age nor developing youth being beyond its influence. Lucy was so much amused, so occupied with the change in the house, that the Russells and their concerns faded from her recollection. "Imogen" was put away on a side-table; and she had never required to make use of that subject for conversation: Have you seen the new novel? There was a much more easy one at hand: "Do you know Sir Thomas?" was now the question with which she took the initiative; and Lucy found a power of language she had never dreamt of possessing, in describing his travels and the things he had brought home. Sir Thomas had shot a lion—actually a lion—and had brought back its magnificent skin as a

trophy. She got a little pink tinge on her cheeks, which was very becoming, as she described it. This gave her quite a little *succès* among Lady Randolph's visitors, who had hitherto found her very elementary ; and already there were jokes about Pygmalion and Galatea, and about the sunshine, which made buds open and birds sing. Lady Randolph, looking on watchfully, would have preferred that the spell had not worked quite so quickly. But as for Lucy she was delighted by her own awakening, and pleased to find herself enjoying everything, even the talk. The house was so much more cheerful now Sir Tom was in it. She put off her usual visit to Jock for a whole week. To be sure there were various reasons for that, for Lucy did not know how to meet Bertie Russell after the dedication, and felt that to speak of it, even to his mother, was difficult. What could she say ? It was very "kind," but then it was, as Lady Randolph said, "too broad." Lucy did not like to think of it. She did not know how to meet the young man who had called her an angel of Hope, and addressed her,

even in print, as Lucy ; and yet when they met she would be obliged to say something to him. Her embarrassment on this point had been greatly increased by the fact that Sir Tom had found the dedication out, and had “made fun” of it. He was mischievous, though Lucy did not like to think he was unkind. Sometimes he would refer to the Angel of Hope in a way which covered her with confusion, alarming her with a possibility of betrayal ; but it was only to tease her, and she did not on the whole dislike Sir Tom’s teasing. On one of these occasions however she was so much frightened that she remonstrated. “Please,” she said, “do not tell any one it is me. Perhaps after all it is not me ; Lucy is not an uncommon name. And oh, Sir Thomas, *if* you please, do not talk of it when any one is here.”

“I am afraid it must be you,” Sir Thomas said, “there could not be two with the same characteristics ; but you may trust me, Miss Lucy, I will not tell, no, not for anything that might be offered me. Wild horses——”

“ You are laughing at me,” she said.

“Would you have me cry? But I should like to punch the young fellow’s head. He had no right to do it. It was like a cad to do it; even in gratitude, he ought not to have exposed you to anything that might be disagreeable; besides, Miss Lucy, it is taking a base advantage of other fellows who cannot write books.”

Lucy was not quite sure what he meant by this, but she replied very gravely,

“I am afraid it is the only thing he can do. Do not laugh, please, it is very serious. I am very anxious to know how it turns out.”

“Then you take a great deal of interest in him?”

“I take a great deal of interest in *that*. They all depend upon it; and also for other things. Do you think he will make much money by it, Sir Thomas?”

“I have not an idea; the only thing I know about literature is that I was offered something if I would write my travels. I have been in a good many out of the way places, you know, and then I am pretty well known; but, unfortunately,

I could not, so that money got lost, more's the pity!"

"It was a great pity," said Lucy, with feeling. "How strange it seems, you who cannot write are offered money for it, and he who can write is kept so uncertain. It seems always to be like that. There is myself, with a great deal too much money, and so many people with none at all."

Sir Thomas laughed; the frankness of the heiress amused him beyond measure.

"Have you a great deal too much money?" he said.

"Yes, did you not know? But it will not be so much," Lucy said, with an involuntary burst of confidence, "after a while."

This puzzled him quite as much as anything he could say puzzled her. He did not know what to make of it, for there was no jest, but perfect and candid gravity in Lucy's tone. He thought it best, however, to take it as a mere girlish levity and threat of extravagance to come.

"Do you mean to make it go, then?" he said.

“Don’t! Take my advice: I have a good right to give it, for I have paid for my experience. Don’t throw your money away as I have done.”

“Have you thrown it away? I am very sorry. I—wonder——?” Lucy looked at him doubtfully, almost wistfully. Was she going to offer him some of hers? he asked himself. He was at once amused and touched, and full of expectation as to what she would say next; but Lucy changed her tone. “I will not throw it away,” she said quietly. “Papa directed me, before he died, what to do with it. It is a great responsibility;” and here she paused and looked at him once more. Was she going to confide some secret to him? Sir Thomas was very much puzzled, indeed, more than he remembered ever to have been puzzled by any girl. He was a man over thirty, a man of large experience, but this young creature was a novelty to him.

“I should like to see how you will spend your fortune,” he said. “I shall watch what you do with it. Mine went before I took time to consider the responsibility. Marriage is not the

only thing that one does in haste and repents at leisure. I am very sorry now, I can tell you, that I was such a fool when I was young."

"I—wonder——?" Lucy said again, softly to herself. She could not help longing to tell somebody her secret, somebody that would feel a little sympathy for her—why not this big, kind, genial stranger, who was quite unlike all the rest of her people? who would surely understand, she thought. But Sir Thomas did not in the least understand. He thought she would have liked to give him some of her money, and, indeed, for his own part, he would not have had the slightest objection to accept the whole of it, as his aunt had planned and hoped; but a portion would be impossible. He laughed, looking at her, in his turn, with kindness in his amusement.

"Are you meditating some benevolence?" he said. "But, Miss Lucy, benevolence is a very doubtful virtue. You must reflect well, and take the advice of your business people. You must not be too ready to give away. You see, though I have not known you long, I am disposed to

take upon me the tone of a Mentor already, an uncle experienced and elderly, or something of that sort."

"Indeed, that is just what I should like," Lucy said, simply.

This was a dreadful dash of cold water in his face. It is one thing to call yourself experienced and elderly, and quite another to be taken at your word. He laughed again, but this time at himself, and accepted the position with a curious sense of its inappropriateness which was all the more vivid because she did not seem to see it to be inappropriate at all.

"Well," he said, "that's a bargain. When you want to do anything angelically silly, and throw away your money, you are to come and consult me."

"Do you really mean it?" said Lucy, with most serious eyes.

"I really mean it, and there is my hand upon it," he said. She put her hand into his with gentle confidence, and he held it for a moment, looking at the slender fingers. Lucy, as has

been said, had, though she had no right to it, a pretty hand. "What a little bit of a thing," he said, "to have so much to give away."

"Yes," Lucy said, with a long breath that was scarcely a sigh, and without the vestige of a blush or embarrassment, "it is a great responsibility." She was as sincere and serious as if he had been an old woman, Sir Thomas felt, and he laughed and let the little hand drop. His fatherly flirtation, a mode which he had known to be very efficacious, had no more effect than if he had been a hundred. This failure tickled his sense of humour, far more than success would have pleased him otherwise.

"That girl is a little original," he said, when he talked her over with Lady Randolph; but, meantime, it was very certain that they were the best of friends.

They were seated at breakfast on Saturday morning, rather more than a week after his arrival. Lucy had been making up her mind that she could make no further excuse to herself, but must go to Hampstead that day, and was

trying, as she drank her coffee, to compose little speeches fit for the occasion. Sir Thomas was half-hidden behind the newspaper, and Lady Randolph cast a glance now and then, as she finished her breakfast, at the pages of a weekly review, supposed to be the most *spirituel* of its kind, the first in fashion and in force.

“Oh!” she cried suddenly. “Lucy! here is something interesting, here is a notice of ‘Imogen.’ You must take it out to the Russells: for once Cecilia has been as good as her word.”—Lucy was in the midst of a carefully turned sentence by which she meant to assure Mrs. Russell that she felt Bertie’s “kindness;” she looked up with lively interest;—then, “Good heavens!” Lady Randolph cried.

“What is the matter, aunt?” said Sir Tom; he put out his big hand and took it from before her, with the license of his privileged position. “We others are most anxious to hear, and you keep it to yourself. Shall I read it aloud, Miss Lucy?”

“No! no!” Lady Randolph cried, putting out

her hand. She was pale with fright and trouble, but Sir Tom did not pay any attention ; he did not notice her looks, and what was there in Bertie Russell to make anything that could be said about his book alarming to these ladies ? He took it up lightly.

“ I must see this Russell,” he said, “ that you are so much interested in. What right has the fellow to make you anxious ? ” he was looking at Lucy, who was, indeed, curious and interested, but no more. “ Now, if you are not good,” he said, looking at her, “ I shall keep you in suspense.”

But Lucy did not accept the challenge. She smiled in reply, with her usual tranquillity.

“ It is Mrs. Russell who will be in suspense,” she said : and with a little friendly nod at her he began to read. It was the kind of review for which this organ of the highest literature was famous. This was what Sir Thomas read :

“ We have so often had occasion to point out to the female manufacturer of novels the disadvantages which attend her habitual unacquaint-

ance with the simplest rules of her art, that it is a sort of relief to find upon the title-page of the most recent example of this class of productions a name which is not feminine. The occurrence is rare. In this branch of industry, at least, men have shown a chivalrous readiness to leave the laurels growing low, and therefore within the reach of the weaker vessel, to the gathering of woman. She has here had the chance, so often demanded, of proving her powers, and she has not been reluctant to avail herself of it. Almost as appropriately feminine as Berlin wool, or the more fashionable crewels, the novel of domestic life has acquired a stamp of virtuous tedium, or unvirtuous excitement, which are equally feminine, and we sigh in vain for a larger rendering even of the levities of existence, a treatment more broad, a touch more virile."

"There's for you, Miss Lucy," said Sir Tom, pausing; "how do you like that, my excellent aunt? He puts your sex in their right place. There's a man now who feels his natural superi-

ority, who contemplates you all *de haut en bas*—”

“Oh, don’t read any more, Tom ; it is not worth your while to read any more.”

“Ah ! you are hit,” he said. “Hurrah ! the iron has entered into your soul.”

“Half a dozen pages of ‘Imogen’ will, however, (he continued reading,) be enough to make any reader pause who is moved by this natural sentiment. What ! he will ask himself, was there no little war in hand demanding recruits ? no expedition to discover the undiscoverable ? even no stones to break on the roadside, which could have given Mr. Albert Russell a bit of manly work to do—that he must take up with this industry reserved for the incompetent ?”

Here Lucy uttered a long drawn “oh !” of alarm. It had not occurred to her ignorance that there could be any malice in it.

“We must give him credit, however, for a courage and liberality beyond that of his feminine contemporaries in the freedom with which he

has mixed up what is apparently a personal romance of his own with this production of his genius. Whether the young lady, who is poetically addressed as the Angel of Hope, will relish the homage so publicly paid to her is a different matter. We can but hope that, since the art he has adopted is little likely, we fear, to reward his exertions, the other patronesses to whom he devotes himself may be more kind, and that the owner of the pretty Christian name, which is presented without the conventionality of a Miss or Mistress——”

“ Hallo !” said Sir Tom. He had been reading on, without any particular attention to what he read, until the recollection of what it meant suddenly flashed upon him. He grew very red, put down the paper, and looked at his companions. “ By Jove !” he cried.

“ I told you not to read it,” cried Lady Randolph. “ Never mind, Lucy, my love, nobody will know it is you. Oh, I could kill the presumptuous, impertinent—— ! And that woman is worse !” she cried with vehemence. “ She

who knew all about it ; I will never forgive her. She shall never enter this house."

"Woman ?" said Sir Thomas, "what woman ? By Jove !" here he got up and buttoned his coat, "whoever the fellow is he shall have my opinion of him before he is much older."

"Sit down, Tom, sit down. If it was a fellow whom you could knock down there would be no great harm done; no fellow ever wrote *that*," cried Lady Randolph, with that fine contempt of masculine efforts which is peculiar to women. "Oh, I know the hand ! I know every stroke ! But never mind, never mind, my dear child, nobody will connect you with it ; unless the 'Age' gets hold of it, and gives us all a paragraph ; there is nothing more likely," she cried, with tears of anger and annoyance. As for Sir Thomas, he paced about the room in great perturbation, saying, "By Jove !" under his breath.

"A woman ! then there is nothing to be done," he said.

"Oh, no ; you can't knock her down, more's the pity ! or call her out. But, Tom, if you will

think, it is just as well, it is far better; we can't have any talk got up about that innocent child."

"Lady Randolph, is it me you are thinking of? What harm can it do me?" said Lucy, who had grown pale, but was puzzled and frightened, and did not quite understand why all this excitement should be.

"What harm, indeed!" cried Lady Randolph, "so long as you don't mind it, my darling! She is the only one that has sense among us, Tom."

"That is all very well," Sir Tom said. "She is too young to understand; it is meant for an insult. There's the harm of women getting their fingers into every pie. You can't kick them. By Jove! isn't there any other way that one can serve her out?"

"Sir Thomas," said Lucy, "you laughed at me about it yourself."

"So I did; I am ready to laugh at you, my dear little girl, any moment—but I should like to see another man do it," he cried.

Lady Randolph looked at him in dismay.

What could he mean? to speak with such kindly familiarity, as if she were his cousin, at the least. (Though Lady Randolph professed to be a connection, yet this link was not even known to Sir Tom.) Would not the heiress be alarmed? would not she suspect and divine? She turned her eyes furtively towards Lucy, more troubled than before.

But Lucy took it all very calmly. She showed no consciousness of too much or too little in her new friend's address. She smiled at him with grateful confidence, without even a blush. What was there to blush for? Then her face clouded over a little.

“Will it hurt the book? will he get no money for it?” she said.

## CHAPTER X.

## A BAD RECEPTION.

LUCY rode to Hampstead that morning, Sir Thomas, to her great surprise, volunteering to go with her. He had some one in those regions whom he too, wished to see, he said. Lucy was not sure whether she was most pleased or disconcerted by this companionship; but the ride was all the more agreeable. He was, as usual, very kind, friendly, and brotherly—or rather, as she thought, taking his own statement frankly, like an uncle, an elder, experienced, but altogether delightful friend, to whom she could say a great many things, which it would have been impossible to say to one near her own age and condition.

Oddly enough Lucy was mysterious to Sir Thomas, the only person with whom she felt inclined to be confidential. She hovered about the edge of her secret, asking herself whether she should confide in him, half betraying herself, then drawing back, more from shyness than want of faith in him. She had known him so short a time; perhaps he would think it bold and presuming of her, to thrust her confidences upon him. This hesitation on her part gave her an attraction which was not at all natural to her. The touch of the little mystery added what was wanting to the simplicity, and good sense, and straightforward reasonableness of Lucy's character. What was it that lay thus below the surface? Sir Thomas asked himself. What did she want to confide to him? there was certainly something; was it some entanglement or other, some girlish engagement perhaps with this fellow, who had been base enough to expose her to the remarks of the world. It seemed to Sir Tom that this was the most natural secret, the most probable embarrassment that Lucy could have; and with great vehemence

of disdain and wrath, he thought of the “cad” who had probably inveigled the girl into some sort of promise, and then proceeded to brag of it before all the world. Thus Sir Thomas Randolph, out of his much experience, entirely misconstrued these two young persons who had no experience at all. Bertie Russell was not a young man of very elevated character, but he was not a “cad;” neither, very far from it, was Lucy a fool; but then Sir Tom—though he was full of honest instincts and good feeling, and would not himself (though he thought it no harm to lay siege to an heiress, when the chance fell in his way) have done anything which could be stigmatized as the act of a cad—still judged as the world judges, which is after all a superficial way of estimating human action : and he was as entirely wrong, and blundered as completely in the maze of his own inventions, as the greatest simpleton could have done ; which is one of the penalties of worldly wisdom, though one which the wise are most slow to learn. Notwithstanding, he made her ride very pleasant to Lucy. He talked up all

sorts of subjects, not allowing her mind to dwell upon the annoyance of the morning. And though this annoyance was not at all of the kind he imagined, it was still good for her not to be left to invent little speeches to be made to Mrs. Russell, or to imagine dialogues that might never take place. Lucy's mind had been in a good deal of excitement when they set out. She had resolved to make the plunge, to announce her intentions to Mrs. Russell, and though there was nothing but good in these intentions, still it requires almost as much courage to inform a person who has no natural claim upon you that you mean to provide for her as it does to interfere in any other way in the concerns of a stranger; or at least this was how Lucy felt. Her heart beat: had she been a poor governess going to look for a situation she could not have been more nervous about the result of the interview. But the summer morning was exhilarating, and Sir Thomas talked to her all the way. He told her of a great many other rides taken in very different circumstances, he took her for little excursions,

so to speak, into his own life ; he made her laugh, he led her out of herself. When she reached Mrs. Russell's door, she had almost forgot how momentous was the act she was about to do. "I will come back for you," Sir Tom cried, waving his hand. He did not come up the steep bit of street. How kind he was, not oppressing her with too much even of his own company ! Lucy had not known how she was to get rid of him when she reached the house.

The house looked more neglected than ever when Lucy went in. She could not but notice that, as soon as she appeared, the blind of the dining-room, which faced the street, was hurriedly drawn down. She could, it was true, command it as she sat there on her horse ; but she was wounded by the suggestion that she might intend to spy upon them, to look at something which she was not wanted to see. In the hall, outside the door of this closed room, a breakfast tray was standing, though it was noon. The grimy little maid was more grimy than ever. She showed Lucy into the faded drawing-room,

where the blinds were drawn down for the sun, which however streamed in at all the crevices, showing the dust and the faded colours. There were flowers on the table in a trumpery glass vase, all limp and dying. A shabby miserable room, of which no care was taken, and which looked like the abode of people who had lost heart, and even ceased to care for appearances. Lucy's heart sank as she looked round. She who was so tidy, with so much bourgeois orderliness in her nature, felt all this much more than perhaps an observer with higher faculties would have done. It looked as if it had not been "touched" this morning, and it was with a pang of pity that Lucy regarded the evident disorganization of a house in which the chief room, the woman's place, "had not been touched" at noon of a summer day. It almost brought the tears to her eyes. And she had a long time to wait to note all the dust, the bits of trimming torn off the curtains, the unmended holes in the carpet. She even looked about furtively for a needle and thread: but there were no implements of work to

be seen, nothing but the fading flowers all soiled with decay, a fine shabby book on the undusted table, the common showy ornaments all astray on the mantelpiece. About a quarter of an hour passed thus before Mrs. Russell came in, with eyes redder than ever. Mrs. Russell could not be untidy though her room was. She had the decorum of her class whatever happened ; but her black gown was rusty, and the long streamers of her widow's cap had been worn longer than was compatible with freshness. She held herself very stiffly as she came in, and gave Lucy the tips of her fingers. The poorer she was the more stately she became. There was in her attitude, in her expression, a reproach against the world. That she should be thus poor, thus unfortunate, was somebody's fault.

“Your little brother is out, Miss Trevor, with the others. He thought you had quite given him up, and were coming no more.”

“Oh, Jock could not think that.”

“Perhaps not Jock; but I certainly did, who have, I hope, some experience of the world;”

said the poor lady, in her bitterness, "it is quite natural; though I should have thought Lady Randolph had sufficient knowledge of what is considered proper, to respect your recent mourning; but all these old formalities are made light of nowadays. When one sees girls dancing in crape! I wonder they don't feel as if they were dancing over their relations' graves."

"Dear Mrs. Russell," said Lucy; "I have not been dancing. I did not come because—because— It was Lady Randolph that was vexed. I am much obliged, *very* much obliged to Mr. Bertie for being so kind; but Lady Randolph thought—"

"Yes, I never doubted it," cried Bertie's mother, with an outburst. "I never doubted it! I told him it was imprudent at the time, and would expose him to unjust suspicions; as if *he* was one to scheme for anybody's money! much more likely her own nephew, her dear Sir Thomas, whom she is always talking of! But Bertie would do it; he said where he owed grati-

tude he never should be afraid to pay it. And to think that the very person he wished to honour should turn against him ; and now he is ruined altogether—ruined in all his prospects !” the poor mother cried amid a tempest of sobs.

“ Ruined !” cried Lucy, aghast.

“ He is lying there, in the next room, my poor boy. I thought he would have died this morning—oh, it is cruel, cruel ! He is quite crushed by it. I tell him it is all a wicked plot, and that surely, surely, there will be some honest man who will do him justice ! But, though I say it, I don’t put any faith in it, for where is there an honest critic ?” cried Mrs. Russell ; “ from all I hear there is not such a thing to be found. They praise the people they know—people who court them and fawn on them ; but it isn’t in the Russell blood to do that. And the worst of all,” she said, with a fresh flood of tears, “ the worst of all—the thing that has just been the last blow—is that you have not stood by him, Lucy, you that kept on encouraging him, and have brought it all upon him.”

"*I* brought it all upon him!" Lucy's consternation was almost beyond words.

"Yes, Miss Trevor," said the poor lady, hysterically. "He would never have done it had not you encouraged him—never! and now this is what is brought against him. Oh, they cannot say a word against his talent," she said; "not a word! They cannot say the book is not beautiful; what they say is all about *that*, which was put in to please *you*—and you have not the heart to stand up for him!" the mother cried. She was so much excited, and poured forth such tears and sobs, that Lucy found herself without a word to say. The trouble, no doubt, was real enough, but it was mixed with so much excitement and feverish exaggeration that the girl's sympathetic heart was chilled; and yet she had so much to say. "But he must not put up with it," cried Mrs. Russell; "he shall not put up with it if I can help it. He must write and tell them. And there is not one word of real criticism—not one word! Bertie himself says so; nothing but joking and jeering about the dedication. But I

know whose hand that is—it is Lady Randolph who has done it. I knew she would interfere as soon as she thought—‘Bertie,’ I said, ‘don’t—don’t for heaven’s sake! You will bring a hornet’s nest about your ears.’ But he always said ‘Mother! I must.’ And now to think that the girl herself, that has brought him into all this trouble, should not have the heart to stand up for him! Oh, it just shows what I’ve always said, the wickedness and hollowness of the world!”

Then there was a pause, through which was heard only the sound of Mrs. Russell’s sobbing. Lucy sat undecided, not knowing what to do. She was indignant, but more surprised than indignant, at the accusation; and she was entirely unaccustomed to blame, and did not know how to defend herself. She sat with her heart beating, and listened, now and then trying to remonstrate, to make an appeal, but in vain. At last, the moment came when her accuser had poured forth all she had to say. But this silence was almost as painful as the unexpected violence that preceded it. To be accused wrongfully, if

terrible, has still some counterbalancing effect in the roused *amour-propre* of the innocent victim ; but to watch the voice of the accuser quenched by emotion, to hear the sobs dying off, then bursting out again, the red eyes wiped, then filling —all in a silence which her own lips were too much parched with agitation to permit her to break, was almost more hard upon Lucy. She had become very pale, and she did not know what to say. More entirely guiltless than she felt herself, no one could have been. She was so innocent that she had no defence to make ; and the attack took from her all the thoughts of which her mind had been full. All the more the silence weighed upon her. It was terrible to sit there with her eyes on the floor, and say nothing. At last she managed to falter forth : “ May I see Jock, Mrs. Russell, before I go ? ”

“ I suppose you will want to remove him,” Mrs. Russell said. “ Oh ! I quite understand that. I expected nothing else. The brother of a rich heiress is out of place with a poor ruined

family. Everything is forsaking us. Let him go too—let him go too!"

"Indeed!" said Lucy, recovering her composure a little. "I was not thinking of that. I meant only —"

"Never mind what you meant, Miss Trevor; it is better he should go. Things have gone too far now," said the disturbed woman. "All the rest are going—we shall have to go ourselves. Oh! I thought it would not matter so long as my Bertie—God forgive them! God forgive them!" she said, with trembling lips. "I thought it would all come right, and everything succeed, when my boy — But we are ruined, ruined! I don't know where we are to turn, or what we are to do."

"Mrs. Russell, will you let me say something to you?" Lucy said. This cry of distress had restored her to herself. "I meant to have said it before. It is not because of what has happened. It was all settled in my mind before. I was only waiting till I could arrange with my

guardian. Mrs. Russell, papa left some money to be given away—”

Here she made a little pause for breath. Her companion made no remark, but sat, lying back in her chair, with her handkerchief to her eyes.

“ It was a good deal of money,” said Lucy. “ He told me I was not to throw it away, but to give enough to be of real use. I thought —that you would like to have some of it, Mrs. Russell. That—it might do you a little good.”

Mrs. Russell let her handkerchief drop, and stared at Lucy with her poor red eyes.

“ If you would let me give you part of it—I cannot tell how much would be enough: but if you would tell me—and we could consider everything. It is lying there for the use of—people who are in want of it. I hope you will take some of it. I should be very *thankful* to you,” said Lucy, with a little nervous emphasis. “ It is there only to be given away.”

Lucy had felt that it would be a difficult com-

munication to make, but she had no fear of any refusal. She did not venture to look up, but kept her eyes fixed on the carpet, though she was very conscious, notwithstanding, of every movement her companion made. The girl was shy of the favour she was conferring, and frightened in anticipation of the thanks she would probably receive; if only it could be settled and paid without any thanks! When her own voice stopped she became still more frightened. The silence was unbearable, and Lucy gave an alarmed glance towards the sofa. Mrs. Russell was gasping for breath, inflating her lungs, apparently, in vain, and struggling for utterance. This struggle ended in a hoarse and moaning cry.

“Oh, what have I done, what have I done, that it should come to this?”

“Mrs. Russell! you are ill. Are you ill?” Lucy cried, alarmed.

“Oh, what have I done, what have I done, that it should come to this?” she moaned. “Am I a beggar that it should come to this? to offer

me money in my own house? money, as if I were a beggar in the street? Oh, don't say anything more, Miss Trevor, don't say anything more!" Here she got up, clasping her hands wildly, and walked about the room like a creature distracted, as, indeed, between pride and shame, and wretchedness and folly, the poor woman almost was. "Oh, why didn't I die! why didn't I die when *he* died?" she cried. "It is more than I can bear. I, that was a Stonehouse, and married a Russell, to be treated like a beggar on the street. Oh, my God!" cried the excited creature, "have I not enough to bear without being insulted? I can starve, or I can die, but to be insulted—it is more than I can bear."

Lucy was confounded. She stumbled to her feet, also, in overwhelming distress. She had meant no harm, heaven knows! She had not meant to wound the most delicate feeling. It was a view of the matter which had never occurred to her.

"I must have said something wrong—without

meaning it," she faltered. "I don't know how to speak, but I did not mean to make you angry; oh, forgive me! please forgive me! I mean nothing but——"

"This is what it is to be poor," Mrs. Russell said. "Oh, I ought to thank you for it, that among other things—I never would have known all the bitterness of being poor but for this: and yet I never held out my hand to ask anything," she cried, beginning to weep. "I never thrust my poverty on anybody. I did all I could to keep up—a good appearance; and to hope——" here the sobs burst forth again beyond restraint, "for better days."

"What is the matter?" said Bertie, pushing open the door. He was carelessly dressed in an old coat, his hair in disorder, his feet in slippers, he who had always decorated himself so carefully for Lucy's eyes. He did not take the trouble to open the door with his hand, but pushed it rudely with his person, and gave Lucy a sullen nod and good morning. "What are you making such a row about, mother?" he said.

"Oh, Bertie, Miss Trevor has come—to offer me charity!" she cried, "charity! She sees we are poor, and, because she is rich, she thinks she can treat me, me! like a beggar in the street, and offer me money. Oh, Bertie! Bertie! my boy!" the poor woman threw her arm round him, and began to sob on his shoulder, "what has your poor mother done that she should be humbled like this?"

"Charity!" he said; then looked at Lucy with an insolent laugh that brought the colour to the girl's face; "it is, perhaps, conscience money," he cried. Then putting his mother away from him: "Go and lie down, mamma, you have had excitement enough this morning. We are not beggars, whatever Miss Trevor may think." Bertie's eyes were red too, he was still at the age when tears, though the man is ashamed of them, are not far from the eyes when trouble comes. "Naturally," he said, "we all stand upon what we have got, and money is what you have got, Miss Trevor. Oh, it is a very good thing, it saves you from many annoyances. We have not

very much of it, but we can do without charity.” His lip quivered, his heart was sore, and his pride cut to pieces. “Money is not everything, though, perhaps, *you* may be excused for thinking so,” he said. He wanted to retaliate on some one; the smarting of his eyelids, the quiver which he could not keep from his lips, the wounds of his pride still bleeding and fresh, all filled him with a kind of blind fury and desire to make some one else suffer. He would have liked to tear his angel of hope to pieces in the misery of his disappointment. Was it not her fault?

As for Lucy, she stood like a culprit before the mother and the son, looking at them with a pathetic protest in her eyes, like that with which an innocent dumb creature appeals against fate. She was as much surprised by all this storm of denunciation as a lamb is by the blow that ends its life. When they were silent, and it was time for her to speak, she opened her lips and drew a long troubled breath, but she could say nothing for herself. What was there to say?

She was too much astonished even for indignation.

"I—will go, if you please, and wait for Jock in the street," was all she found herself able to say.

And just then the voices of the children, to her great relief, were audible outside. Lucy hurried away, feeling for the moment more miserable than she had ever been in her life before. There were but three little boys now, and Mary, who had come in with them, was standing a little in advance, listening, with an anxious face, to the sound of the voices in the drawing-room. Mary was hostile too ; she looked at Lucy with defiant eyes.

"Oh, is it really you, at last, Miss Trevor ?" she said.

Poor Lucy felt her heart swell with the sting of so much unkindness. She cried when Jock rushed forward and threw himself upon her.

"You are the same, at least," she said with a sob, as she kissed him. "May he come out with me ? for I cannot stay here any longer."

The other girl, who did not know the meaning of all this, was shaken out of her sullenness by the threatening of another calamity. Mary had nothing to do with the quarrel. She grew, if possible, a little more pale.

“Do you mean that he is to go—for good?” she said, looking wistfully at the diminished band, only three, and there had been ten! It was all she could do to keep from crying too. “I have always tried to do the best I could for him,” she said.

## CHAPTER XI.

## A RECEPTION OF A DIFFERENT KIND.

LUCY rode home without waiting for Sir Thomas, with a heavy heart. She said very little when she got back. To Lady Randolph's questions she had scarcely anything to reply. In Lady Randolph's eyes the chief person to be considered was Lucy, whose name had been so cruelly brought before the public. When it did occur to her that the poor young author might be cast down by the cruel comments upon his first production, it is to be feared that the verdict "served him right," was the one that occurred first to her mind. Only in the course of the afternoon, when Lucy's increased gravity had made a dis-

tinct impression upon her, did she express any feeling on this point. "Of course I am sorry for his mother," she said; "a silly woman, no energy, no resource in her; but it will wound her of course. How are they getting on with their school? That little girl, Mary, that was the only one that seemed to me to be good for anything. Are they getting on any better with their school?"

Lucy shook her head. She could not muster courage to speak, the tears were in her eyes.

"Ah!" said Lady Randolph, Lucy's emotion had a very disturbing effect upon her; but it moved her not to compassion for Mrs. Russell, but to suspicion against Bertie. "I never thought it would come to much," she said. "It seems so easy to start anything like that. They had their furniture, and what more did they want. Indian children! one would think it rained Indian children; every poor lady with no money thinks she can manage to make a living out of them—without calculating that everybody in India, or almost everybody, has poor relations of their own."

But she was kind notwithstanding her severity. There are few people who are not more or less kind ~~to~~ absolute suffering. Though she thought Mrs. Russell silly, and considered that her son had been served rightly (if cruelly), and was impatient of the foolish hopes on which their little establishment had been founded, still she could not be satisfied to leave the poor lady whom she had known in her better days, to want. “I will speak to Tom,” she said, “if Bertie could but get some situation, far better than writing non-sensical books, something in the Customs, or perhaps the post-office—I believe there are a great many young men of good families in places like that—where he could get a settled income, and be able to help his mother.”

Lucy made no reply to this suggestion. She brightened a little in the evening, when Sir Tom came in, bringing all his news with him; but she was not herself. When she was safe in her room at night, she cried plentifully, like a child as she was, over her failure. Perhaps her heart had never been so sore. Sorrow, such as she had

felt for her father, is a different thing—there had been no cross or complication in that; but in this all her life seemed to be compromised. This dearest legacy that had been left her, the power of making others happy, was it to be a failure in her hands? She had never contemplated such a probability. In all the books she had read (and these are a girl's only medium of knowledge) there had been no such incident. There had been indeed records of profuse gratitude, followed by unkindness and indifference; but these had never alarmed Lucy. Gratitude had been the only thing she feared, and that the recipients of the bounty should forget it, was her chief hope. But this unexpected rebuff threw Lucy down to the earth from those heights of happy and simple beneficence. Was it her fault, she asked herself? had she offered it unkindly, shown any ungenerous feeling? She examined every word she had said—at least as far as she could recollect them; but she had been so much agitated, so overwhelmed by the excitement and passion of the others, that she could not recollect much that she

had said. All night long in her dreams she was pleading with people who would not take her gifts, and blaming herself for not knowing how to offer them. And when she woke in the morning, was it my fault? was the first question that occurred to her. It seemed to assail the very foundations of her life. Was not this her first duty, and if she could not discharge it what was to become of her? What would be the value of all the rest?

She was sitting in the sitting-room in the morning, somewhat disconsolate, pondering these questions. A bright, still morning of midsummer, all the windows open, and shaded by the pretty striped blinds outside, which kept out the obtrusive sunshine, yet showed it brilliant over all the world below; the windows were full of flowers, those city plants always at the fullest perfection, which know no vicissitudes of growth or decay, but fill the luxurious rooms with one continuous bloom, by grace, not of nature, but the gardener. It was the hour when Lucy was supposed to "read." She had not herself any

great eagerness for education ; but no woman who respects herself can live in the same house with a young girl nowadays, without taking care to provide that she shall “read.” Lucy had need enough, it must be allowed, to improve her mind ; but that mind, so far as the purely intellectual qualities were concerned, did not count for very much in her being. To be more or less well-informed does not affect very much, one way or other, the character, though we fear to utter any dogmatism on such a subject. She was reading history, poor child ; she had a number of books open before her, a large Atlas, and was toiling conscientiously through a number of battles. Into the very midst of these battles, her thoughts of the earlier morning, which were so much more interesting to her, would intrude, and indeed she had paused after the battle of Lepanto, and was asking herself, not who was Don John of Austria, or what other great personages had figured there, which was what she ought to have done—but whether it could possibly be her fault, and in what other form she could have put it to succeed

better—when suddenly, without any warning, a knock came to her door. She sat very bolt upright at once, and thought of Don John, before she said “Come in.” Perhaps it was the lady who was so kind as to read with her—perhaps it was Lady Randolph. She said “Come in,” and with no displeasure at all, but much consolation, closed her book. She was not sorry to part company with Don John.

To her great surprise, when the door opened, it was neither Lady Randolph nor the lady who directed her reading, but Mrs. Russell, with the heavy crape veil hanging over her bonnet, her eyes still very red, and her countenance very pale. Lucy rose hastily from her chair, repeating her “Come in,” with the profoundest astonishment, but eagerness. Could it be Jock who was ill? could it be—Mrs. Russell smiled a somewhat ghastly smile, and looked with an anxious face at the surprised girl. She took the chair Lucy gave her, threw back her veil, and the little mantle from her shoulders, which was crape too, and looked suffocating. Then she prepared for

the interview by taking out her handkerchief. Tears were inevitable, however it might turn out.

" You will be surprised to see me," Mrs. Russell said.

Lucy assented breathless. " Is there anything the matter with Jock ?" she said.

" It is natural you should think of your own first," said the visitor with a little forced smile. " Oh, very natural. We always think of our own first. No, Miss Trevor, there is nothing the matter with Jock. What should be the matter with him ? He is very well cared for. My poor Mary gives herself up to the care of him. She lies awake with him and his stories. Mary is a —— She is the best daughter that ever was——" the mother said with fervour. Now Mary was generally in the background among the Russells, and Lucy was perplexed more and more.

" It is by Mary's advice I have come," Mrs. Russell said, putting her handkerchief to her eyes. " It has been very difficult for me, very

difficult to make up my mind to come, Miss Trevor. Mary says she is sure you meant—kindly—yesterday. I don't know how to refer to yesterday. Everything that passed is written here," she said, putting her hand upon her breast, "as if it were in fire—as if it were in fire! Oh, Miss Trevor! you don't know what it is when a woman has kept up a good position all her life, and always been able to hold her head high—you don't know what it is when she has to give in, and allow herself to be spoken to as one of the poor!"

Here she began to cry, and Lucy cried too. "I did not mean it," she said fervently, "indeed, indeed, I did not mean it. If I said anything wrong, forgive me. It was because I did not know how to speak."

"Well, dear," said Mrs. Russell, drying her eyes, "perhaps it was so. You are very young, and you have not had much experience; and, as Bertie says, you have so much money, that it is no wonder if you think a great deal of it. But you shouldn't, Miss Trevor—you shouldn't.

Money is of great use ; but it is not everything.”

Here the poor lady paused and glanced round the room, in every point so dainty, all the details so perfect, everything fresh, well chosen, adapted to the corner it filled ; and the flowers so abundant, and so sweet. “ Oh ! ” she said, “ it wants no arguing. Money tells for so much in this life. Look at my Mary. She is younger than you are, she is clever and good, yet look at her, and look at you. I think it will break my heart ! ”

Lucy made no reply. After all, it was not her fault that she had a great deal of money—that she was a great heiress. There was no reason why that fact should break Mrs. Russell’s heart. “ If I had not had it,” she faltered apologetically, “ some one else would have had it. It would not have made any difference if it had been another girl, or me.”

“ Oh yes ! it would have made a difference. When you don’t know the person, it never feels quite so hard. But I don’t blame you—I don’t

blame you. I suppose everyone would be rich if they could; or, at least, most people," said Mrs. Russell with a tone which seemed to imply that she herself would be the exception, and superior to the charms of wealth.

At this Lucy was silent, perhaps not feeling that she had ever wished to be poor; and yet who, she thought within herself, knew the burden of wealth as she did? it had brought her more trouble than pleasure as yet. She felt troubled and cast down, even though her girlish submission began to be modified by the faintest shy gleam of consciousness that there was something ludicrous in the situation, in her visitor's disapproval, and her own humble half-acknowledgment of the guilt of being rich.

"Miss Trevor," Mrs. Russell said, with trembling lips. "Though I wish you had not found it out, or that, if you did, you had not taken any notice of it, which is what one expects from one's friends, I cannot deny that you are right. We have lost almost everything," she said, steadying her voice in dreary sincerity. "We

have been fighting on from hand to mouth—sometimes not knowing where next week's bills were to come from. Oh! more than that—not able to pay the week's bills; getting into debt, and nothing, nothing coming in. I kept up, always hoping that Bertie—Bertie with his talents— Oh! you don't know—nobody knows how clever he is! As soon as he got an opening — But now it seems all ended," she added, her voice failing. " These people, oh God, forgive them! they don't know, perhaps, how wicked it is—these envious cruel people have half killed my boy; and I have not a penny, nothing, Miss Trevor, nothing; and the rent due, and the pupils all dropping away."

Lucy rose and came to where the poor woman sat struggling with her emotion. It was not a case for words. She went and stood by her, crying softly, while Mrs. Russell leant her crape-laden head upon the girl's breast and sobbed. All her defences were broken down. She grasped Lucy's arm and clung to it as if it had been an anchor of salvation. " And I came—" she

gasped, “to say, if you would really be so kind —oh, how can I ask it!—as to *lend* us the money you spoke of—only to *lend* it, Miss Trevor, till something better turns up—till Bertie gets something to do. He is willing to do anything now: or till Mary finds a situation. It can’t be but that we shall be able to pay you, somehow —— And there is the furniture for security. Oh! I don’t know how to ask it. I never borrowed money before, nor wished for anything that was not my own. But, oh, Lucy! if you really, really have it to do what you like with— The best people are obliged to borrow sometimes,” Mrs. Russell added looking up wistfully with an attempt at a smile, “and there is nothing to be ashamed of in being poor.”

But this was an emergency for which Lucy’s straightforward nature was not prepared. She had the power to give she knew; but to lend she did not think she had any power. What was she to do? She had not imagination enough to conceive the possibility that borrowing does not always mean repaying. She hesitated and

faltering. "Dear Mrs. Russell, it is there for you—if you would only take it, take it altogether!" Lucy said in supplicating tones.

"No," said her visitor firmly. "No, Lucy, do not ask me. You will only make me go away very miserable—more miserable than I was when I came. If you will *lend* it to me, I shall be very glad. I don't hesitate to say it will be a great, great service—it will almost be saving our lives. I would offer to pay you interest, but I don't think you would like that. I told Bertie so; and he said if I were to give you an I—O—U; I don't understand it, Lucy, and you do not understand it, my dear; but he says that is the way."

"There was nothing about lending, I think, in the will," said Lucy, very doubtfully; "but," she added after a moment, with a sudden gleam of cheerfulness. "I will tell you how we can do it. I am to be quite free to do what I please in seven years—"

"In seven years!" poor Mrs. Russell's face seemed to draw out and lengthen, as she said

these words, until it was almost as long as the period, though it did not seem easy to see by what means the fact could affect her present purpose. Lucy nodded very cheerfully. She had quite regained her courage and satisfaction with her fate.

"I will *give* it you for seven years," she said, going back to her seat, "and then you can give it me back again, there will be no need for I.O.—what? or anything of the sort. We will be sure to pay each other, if we remember—"

"I shall be sure to remember, Miss Trevor," said Mrs. Russell, almost sternly; "a matter of business like this is not a thing to be forgot."

"Then that is all settled," cried Lucy, quite gaily. "Oh, I am so glad! I have been so unhappy since I was at Hampstead. I thought it must be my fault."

"Not altogether your fault," said Mrs. Russell. "Oh, you must not blame yourself too much, my dear, there was something on both sides; you were a little brusque, and perhaps thinking too much of your money. I should say that was the

weak point in your character; and we were proud—we are too proud—that is our besetting sin,” she said, with an air of satisfaction.

Mrs. Russell dried the last lingering tears from the corners of her eyes, everything had become tranquil and sweet in the atmosphere once so laden with tragic elements ; but still there was an anxious contraction in her forehead, and she looked wistfully at the girl who had so much in her hands.

“I know,” said Lucy, “you would like it directly, and I will try, I will try to get it at once. I will send it to you, if I can, to-night ; but perhaps not to-night, it might be too late ; to-morrow I think I could be quite sure. And then we must fix how much,” said Lucy, with something of that intoxication of liberality which children often display, children, but, alas ! few people who have much to give. “How many thousand pounds would do ?”

Mrs. Russell was stupefied, her eyes opened mechanically to their fullest width, her lips parted with consternation.

"Thousand pounds!" she echoed, aghast. The poor soul had thought of fifty, and a hundred had seemed to her something too magnificent to be dreamed of.

"One thousand is only fifty pounds a year," said Lucy, "sometimes not that, I believe; it is not very much. What I had thought of was five or six thousand, to make two hundred and fifty pounds a year. Mrs. Ford used to say that two people could live upon that. It is not much, I know, but it would be better, would it not?" the girl said persuasively, "to have a little every year, and always know you were going to have it, than to have a sum of money only once?"

Mrs. Russell looked at the simple young face, all glowing with renewed happiness, till she could look no longer, it seemed to dazzle her. She covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, Lucy, I do not know what to say to you. I have not deserved it, I have not deserved it," she said.

At luncheon Lucy was a changed girl. She had never looked so happy, so bright; the clouds

had blown entirely away from her face and her firmament. She had written a letter to her guardian as soon as Mrs. Russell, her head light and giddy with sudden relief from all her trouble, had gone back to Hampstead in the omnibus, to which she had to bend her pride, protesting mutely by every gesture that it was not a thing she had been used to. No more had been said about the paying back. The idea of an income had stunned this astonished woman, had almost had upon her the effect of an opiate, soothing away all her cares and troubles, wrapping her in a soft stupor of ease and happiness. Could it be true? She had given up, without any further murmur or protest, the conditions she brought with her, and which she had meant to insist upon. Lucy's final proposal had taken away her breath; she had not said anything against it, she had made no remonstrance, no resistance. Her mind was confused with happiness and ease, and the yielding which these sensations bring with them. So poor a careworn woman, distracted with trouble and anxiety she had been when, with

her veil over her face to hide the tears that would come against her will, she had been driven down the same long slope of road, sick with hope, and doubt, and terror, feeling every stoppage of the slow, lumbering machine a new agony, yet half glad of everything which delayed the interview she dreaded, the self-humiliation which she could not escape from. How different were her feelings now! She could not believe in the wonderful good fortune which had befallen her; it removed all capability of resistance, it seemed to trickle through all her veins down to her very feet, upward to nourish her confused brain, a subtle calm, an all dissolving dew of happiness. Provided for! was it possible? was it possible? She did not believe it—the word is too weak, she was incapable of taking in the significance of it mentally at all; but it penetrated her and soothed her, and took all pain from her, giving her an all-pervading consciousness of rest.

As for Lucy, she listened to Sir Tom's gossip with that eloquent interest and ready amusement which is the greatest flattery in the world. All

his jokes were successful with her, her face responded to him almost before he spoke. Lady Randolph could scarcely believe her eyes; the success of her scheme was too rapid. There was terror in her self-gratulation. Would Tom care for such an easy conquest? and if the guardians could not be got to consent to a marriage, was it possible that this could go on for seven years? She would have preferred a more gradual progress. Meanwhile, Lucy took an opportunity to speak apart to this kind new friend of hers, while Lady Randolph was preparing for her usual drive.

“May I ask you something?” she said, after she had actually—no other word would describe the process—*wheedled* him up to the drawing-room after luncheon. It was not often Sir Thomas came to luncheon, and Lucy thought it providential.

“Ask me—anything in the world!” he said, with the kind smile which seemed to Lucy to warm and open up all the corners of her heart. It got into the atmosphere like sunshine, and she felt herself open out in it like a flower.

She stood before him very gravely, with her hands folded together, her eyes raised to his, the utmost seriousness in her face, not at all unlike a girl at school, very innocent and modest, but much in earnest, asking for some momentary concession. He had almost put his hand paternally upon the little head, of whose looks he was beginning to grow fond, though, perhaps, in too elder-brotherly a way. It was while Sir Tom's experienced heart was in this soft and yielding state, that the little girl, raising her soft eyes, asked very distinctly,

“Then would you lend me a hundred pounds, if you please?”

Sir Thomas started as if he had been shot.

“A hundred pounds!” he cried, with consternation in every tone.

Lucy laughed with the happiest ease. There was no one with whom she was so much at home.

“It is only till to-morrow. I have written to Mr. Chervil to come, but he cannot come till to-morrow,” she said.

“And you want a hundred pounds, to-day?”

“If you please,” said Lucy, calmly; “if you will lend it to me. It would be a pleasure to have it to-day.”

Sir Tom’s face grew crimson with embarrassment; had he a hundred pounds to lend? he thought it very unlikely; and his wonder was still more profound. This little thing, not much more than a child: what on earth could she want, all at once, with a hundred pounds? he did not know what to say.

“My dear Miss Lucy,” he said, (for though this title was incorrect, and against the rules of society, and servant-maidish, he had adopted it as less stiff and distant than Miss Trevor). “My dear Miss Lucy: of course I will do whatever you ask me. But let me ask you, from the uncle point of view, you know—is it right that you should want a hundred pounds all in a moment? Yes, you told me you had a great deal of money; but you have also a very small number of years. I don’t ask what you are going to do with it. We have exchanged opinions already, haven’t

we? about the pleasure of throwing money away. But do you think it is right, and that your guardian will approve?"

"It is quite right," said Lucy, gravely; "and my guardian cannot help but approve, for it is in papa's will, Sir Thomas. Thank you very much. I am not throwing it away. I am *giving it back.*"

What does the little witch mean? he asked himself, with consternation and bewilderment? but what could be done? He went out straightway, and after a while he managed to get her the hundred pounds. A baronet with a good estate and some reputation, even though he may have no money to speak of, can always manage that. And Lucy accepted it from him quite serenely, as if it had been a shade of Berlin wool, showing on her side no embarrassment, nor any sense that it was inappropriate that he should be her creditor. She gave him only a smile, and a thank you, and apparently thought nothing more of it. Sir Thomas was fairly struck dumb with the adventure; but to Lucy, so far as he could

make out, it was the most everyday occurrence. She sent her maid to Hampstead that evening—dressing for dinner by herself, a thing which Lucy, not trained to attendance, was always secretly relieved to do—with a basket of strawberries for Jock, and a letter for Mrs. Russell; and the girl's face beamed when she came downstairs. They took her to the opera that evening, where Lucy sat very tranquilly, veiled by the curtains of the box; and listened conscientiously, though she showed no signs of enthusiasm. She had a private little song of her own going on all the while in her heart.

## CHAPTER XII.

## LUCY'S FIRST VENTURE.

WHILE Lucy's mind was thus soothed and comforted by the consciousness of doing her duty, a very different effect was produced upon her father's executors, who, it is scarcely necessary to say, regarded her attempt to fulfil the commands of the secret codicil with mingled consternation and fury. Mr. Chervil, who, being at hand, was the first representative of these legal authorities to be appealed to on the matter, had obeyed her first call with some surprise, and had been, as was not unnatural, driven nearly frantic by the quiet intimation given him by the little girl, whom he looked upon as a child, that she intended to use the power entrusted to her.

“What do you know about Codicil F?” he said. “I don’t know that there is any Codicil F. I don’t believe in it. You are under a mistake, Miss Lucy:” but when she made it apparent to him that her means of knowing were unquestionable, and her determination absolute, Mr. Chervil went a step further—he blasphemed. “It is against every law,” he said. “I don’t believe it would stand in any court. I don’t feel that I should be justified in paying any attention to it. I am sure Rushton would be of my opinion. It was a mere piece of folly, downright madness, delusion—I don’t know what to call it.”

“But whatever it is,” said Lucy, with great prudence, putting forth no theory of her own, “what papa said is law to me.” And though his resistance was desperate, she held her own with a gentle pertinacity.

Lucy’s aspect was so entirely that of a submissive and dutiful girl, she was so modestly commonplace, so unlike a heroine, that it was a long time before he could believe that this little

creature really meant to make a stand upon her rights. He could scarcely believe, even, that she understood what those rights were, or could stand for a moment against his denial of them. When he was driven to remonstrance, a chill of discouragement succeeded the first fury of his refusal. He tried every oratorical art by sheer stress of nature, denouncing, entreating, imploring all in a breath.

"It is like something out of the Dark Ages," he cried. "It is mere demoralization. You will make a race of paupers, you will ruin the character of every person who comes near you. For God's sake! Miss Lucy, think what you want to do. It is not to give away money, it is to spread ruin far and wide—ruin of all the moral sentiments; you will make people dishonest, you will take away their independence, you will be worse than a civil war! And look here," cried the executor, desperate, "perhaps you think you will get gratitude for it: that people will think you a great benefactor? Not a bit of them! You will sow the wind and reap the

whirlwind," he cried, wrath and despair driving him to that great storehouse of poetry with which early training still supplies the most commonplace of Englishmen.

Lucy listened with great attention, and it was an effort for her to restrain her own awe and respect for "a gentleman," and the almost terror with which his excitement, as he paced about her little dainty room, shaking the whole house with his hasty steps, filled her. To see her mild countenance, her slight little form, under the hailstorm of his passion, was half pathetic and half ludicrous. Sometimes she cried, sometimes trembled, but never gave in. Other stormy interviews followed, and letters from Mr. Rushton, in which every argument was addressed both to her "good sense" and "good feeling;" but Lucy had neither the good sense to appreciate their conscientious care of her money, nor the good feeling to allow that her father had in this particular acted like a fool or a madman. She was wise enough to attempt no argument, but she never gave in; there were moments, in-

deed, when the two men were in hopes that they had triumphed; but these were only when Lucy herself was wavering and discouraged in regard to the Russells, and unable to decide what to do. The evening after her final interview with Mrs. Russell, she sent for Mr. Chervil again; and it was not without a little panic and beating of her heart that Lucy looked forward to this conclusive meeting. She had to prop herself up by all kind of supports, recalling to herself the misery she had seen, and the efforts to conceal that misery, which were almost more painful still to behold, and, on the other hand, the precision of her father's orders, which entirely suited the case: "If it is a woman, let it be an income upon which she can live and bring up her children," nothing could be more decided than this. Nevertheless, Lucy felt her heart jump to her mouth when she heard Mr. Chervil's heavy yet impetuous feet come hastily upstairs.

And Mr. Chervil, as was natural, made a desperate stand, feeling it to be the last. He made Lucy cry, and gave her a great deal of very

unpleasant advice ; he went further, he bullied her, and made her blush, asking, coarsely, whether it was for the son's sake that she was so determined to pension the mother ? for she had been obliged to give him full particulars of the Russell family and their distresses. It was a terrible morning for the poor little girl. But if the executor ever hoped to make Lucy swerve, or to bully her into giving up her intention, no mistake could be greater. She blushed, and she cried with shame and pain. All the trouble of a child in being violently scolded, the hurts and wounds, the mortification, the sense of injustice, she felt, but she did not yield an inch. Lucy knew the power she had, and no force on earth would have turned her from it. He might hurt her, that was not hard to do, but change her mind he could not ; her gentle obstinacy was invincible ; she cried, but she stood fast ; and naturally the victory fell to her, after that battle. From the beginning Mr. Chervil knew well enough that if she stood out there was nothing to be done, but it seemed to him that fifty must

be more than a match for seventeen ; and in this he was mistaken, which is not unusual. When, however, all was over, the capitulation signed and sealed, and Lucy, though tearful, entrenched with all her banners flying upon the field of battle, a new sensation awaited the discomfited and angry guardian of her possessions. He thought he had already put up with as much as flesh and blood could bear, but it may be imagined what Mr. Chervil's feelings were when his ward thus addressed him, putting back a little lock of hair which had got out of its usual tidiness during the struggle, (for though there was no actual fighting—far be it from us to insinuate that the angry guardian went the length of blows, though he would have dearly liked to whip her, had he dared—agitation itself puts a girl's light locks out of order,) and pursuing a last tear into the corner of her eyes :

“ I want a hundred pounds, if you please, directly ; I borrowed it yesterday,” said Lucy, with great composure, “ from Sir Thomas, and I said I would pay it back to-day.”

“ You—borrowed a hundred pounds—from Sir Thomas!” His voice gurgled in his throat. It was a wonder that he did not have a fit; the blood rushed to his head, his very breath seemed arrested. It was almost as much as his life—being a man of full habit and sanguine temperament—was worth.

“ Yes,” said Lucy’s calm, little soft voice. There was still occasionally the echo of a sob in it, as in a child’s voice after a fit of crying, but yet it was quite calm. “ Will you write a cheque for him, if you please.”

“ You will drive me mad, Miss Lucy, before you have done!” cried the excited executor, “ all for this woman, this young fellow’s mother, this object of your—— And you go and borrow from another man, borrow, actually—money—from another man, you, an unmarried girl! Oh, this is too much! I must put your affairs in Chancery! I must wash my hands of you! borrow money—from a man!”

“ But I don’t know who else I—could have borrowed it from. Sir Thomas is not just a—

man ; he is a friend. I like him very much, there is nobody so kind. If I had asked Lady Randolph she would have insisted upon knowing everything ; but Sir Thomas understands me—a little," Lucy said.

"Understands you—a little ? Well, it is more than I do," cried her guardian ; but when he came to think of it, this complication silenced him, for if the young fellow at Hampstead had been the object of any childish infatuation, Sir Thomas could not have been brought into it in this way ; and if she had a fancy for Sir Thomas, it was clear the young fellow at Hampstead must be *out* of it. She could not possibly, at her age, be playing off the one against the other. So Mr. Chervil concluded, having just as little confidence in the purity and simplicity of Lucy's motives as everybody else had ; and he gave the cheque with groans of suppressed fury, yet bewilderment. "You don't know the world, Miss Lucy," he said, "though you are very clever. I advise you not to borrow from gentlemen ; they are apt to fancy, when a girl does that sort of thing---- And I

will not have it!" he added, with some violence. " You are my ward and under age, notwithstanding that mad codicil. If it were not that a great part of the money would go to your little brother in case we broke the will, by George, I should try it!" the outraged executor said.

" Would it—to Jock? Oh, that would be a blessing!" cried Lucy, clasping her hands; then she added, the light fading from her face. " But that would be to go against everything papa said, for Jock is no relation to my Uncle Rainy. Of course," said Lucy, with delightful inconsistency, " when I can do what I like, in seven years time, Jock shall have his full share, and if I were to die he would be my heir; you said so, Mr. Chervil, that made my mind quite easy. But I shall not be able to borrow from Sir Thomas again," she added, with a laugh, " because he will not be here."

What could the guardian do more? There was no telling what might happen in seven years; before seven years were over, please God, she would be married—and trust her husband to

guard against the dividing of the fortune! It would be better, Mr. Chervil concluded, to put up with the loss of a few thousand pounds than to risk the cutting up of the whole property, and the alienation of a great part of it from poor Rainy's race. Besides, the executor knew that to break the will would not be an easy matter. The codicil might be eccentric, but old Trevor was sane enough. He growled, but he wrote the cheque, and submitted to everything, though with an ill grace. Lady Randolph offered luncheon to the gentleman from the city, and was pointedly ceremonious, though civil.

"Miss Trevor is rather too young to have such lengthened conferences with gentlemen," she said, "though I have no doubt, Mr. Chervil, I can trust you."

"Trust me, my lady! Why, I am a man with a family!" cried the astonished executor. "I have daughters as old as Miss Lucy." He was confused when Sir Tom's large laugh (for Sir Tom was here again, much amused with the little drama, and almost making his aunt angry

by the devotion with which he carried out her scheme) showed him the folly of this little speech, and added awkwardly, “I don’t suppose she will come to any harm in your hands, but she’s a wild madcap, though she looks so quiet, and as obstinate, as obstinate——”

“Are you all that?” Sir Thomas said, looking at Lucy with the laugh still in his eyes. “You hide it under a wonderfully innocent exterior. It is the lion in lamb’s clothing this time. I think you must require my help, aunt, to manage this dangerous young lady.”

“Oh! I can dispense with your help,” Lady Randolph said, with a little flush of irritation. Decidedly things were going too fast and too far; under the very nose of the executor too, who, no doubt, kept a most keen outlook upon all who surrounded his precious ward. “I am not afraid of Lucy, so long as she is let alone and left to the occupations suitable to her age.” And with this her ladyship rose from the table, and with some impatience bade her young companion to get ready for their drive; though,

as everybody could see, even though the closed blinds which kept the dim dining-room cool, it was hours too early for any drive.

"Just a word to you, Sir Thomas, if you'll permit me," Mr. Chervil said. "That dangerous young lady, as you call her, will run through every penny she has, if she is allowed to have her own way. If you would be so kind as to *not* encourage her, it would be real friendship, though she mightn't think so. But as long as any one backs her up ——"

Sir Thomas opened his eyes wide. "Ah, I see! you took what I said *au pied de la lettre*," he said with languid contempt. Now the executor was little experienced in the French, or any foreign tongue, and he did not know what the foot of the letter meant. He cried, "Oh, no, not at all!" apologetically, shocked at his own boldness; and went away bewildered all round, and much troubled in his mind about the stability of the Rainy estate. Mr. Chervil was the most honourable of trustees—his own interest had nothing at all to do with his opposition.

But prodigality in business-matters was, to him, the master sin, above all those of the Decalogue. There was, indeed, no commandment there which ordained, “Thou shalt not waste thy money, or give it injudiciously away.” But Mr. Chervil felt that this was a mere oversight on the part of the great law-giver, and one which prudent persons had a right to amend on their own account. Mr. Chervil who here felt an unexpressed confidence that he was better informed (on matters of business) than the Almighty, was very sure that he knew a great deal better than old Trevor. He scouted the old man’s ideas as preposterous. That craze of his about *giving it back* was evident madness. Give it back! the thing to be done was exactly the contrary. He himself knew ways of doubling every pound, and building up the great Rainy fortune into proportions colossal and magnificent. But he did not think of any advantage to himself in all this. He was quite content that it should be the little sedate figure of the girl which should be raised, ever higher and higher into the blazing heaven of wealth

upon that golden pedestal, heaped with new and ever-renewed ingots. And not only was this his ambition perfectly honest, but there was even in a way something visionary in it, an ideal, something that stood in the place of poetry and art to Mr. Chervil. It was his way of identifying the highest good, the most perfect beauty. A fortune does not appeal to the eye like a statue or a picture; but sometimes it appeals to the mind in a still more superlative way. Old Trevor's executor felt himself capable of working at it with an enthusiasm which Phidias, which Michael Angelo could not have surpassed. “Anch’ io pittore.” I too have made something all beautiful, all excellent, all but divine, he would have said, had he known how. And when he contemplated the possibility of having his materials taken from him piecemeal, and scattered over the country to produce quite inappreciable results in private holes and corners, his pain and rage and disappointment were almost as great as the sentiments which would have moved the fierce Buonarotti had some

wretched bungler got into his studio, and cut knobs off the very bit of marble in which already he saw his David. Therefore it was not altogether a sordid sentiment which moved him. There was in it something of the desperation of a sincere fanatic, as well as the regret of a man of business over opportunities foolishly thrown away.

And Lucy, if the truth must be told, got no particular satisfaction out of the proceeding. She thought it right to suggest, though very timidly, that instead of the bigger house, which poor Mrs. Russell's desperation had been contemplating, a smaller house, where she could herself be comfortable, would be the best; and the suggestion was not graciously received. The family indeed which she had so greatly befriended contemplated her with a confusion and embarrassment which made poor Lucy wretched. Mary, the one of them whom she had always liked best, avoided the sight of the benefactor who had saved them all from destruction. When she appeared reluctantly, her cheeks red

with shame, and her eyes with crying, she could scarcely look Lucy in the face. "Oh, Miss Trevor! I wish you had not done it. We should have struggled through and been honest," Mary exclaimed averting her eyes; and then she fell a-crying and begged Lucy's pardon with half angry vehemence, declaring she hated herself for her ingratitude. Wondering, bewildered, and sad, Lucy stole away as if she had been a guilty creature from the house to which she had given a little fortune, ease, and security, and comfort. Had she made enemies of them instead of friends? Instead of making them happy, she seemed to have destroyed all family accord, and put everything wrong. Nor was this all the trouble the poor girl had. She had scarcely got back from that mission of uncomfortable beneficence, when she saw by the general aspect of affairs in Lady Randolph's drawing-room that something was wrong. Lady Randolph herself sat bending, with quite unaccustomed energy, over a piece of work, which Lucy had got to know was her refuge when she was annoyed or

disturbed—with a flush under her eyes which was also a sure sign of atmospheric derangement. Sir Thomas was pacing about the room behind backs, and as Lucy came in she saw him (which even in a moment of violent commotion disturbed her orderly soul) tear a newspaper in several pieces, and throw it into the basket under the writing-table: a *new* newspaper, for it was Saturday. What could he mean? Near Lady Randolph was seated old Lady Betsinda full in the light, and looking more like a merchant of old clothes than ever; while Mrs. Berry-Montagu had her usual place in the shadow of the curtains; the two visitors had the conversation in their hands.

“ My dear Mary Randolph,” Lady Betsinda was saying, “ you ought to have taken my advice. Never have anything to do with authors; I say it to everybody, and to you I am sure if I have said it once I have said it a hundred times. They are a beggarly race; they don’t print by subscriptions nowadays, but they do far worse. If they cannot get as much out of you as they

want, they will make you suffer for it. Have not I told you? When you're good to them, they think they pay you a compliment by accepting it. A great many people think it gives them importance to have such persons about their house; they think that is the way to get a *salon* like the French, but there never was a greater mistake. Authors, so far as I've seen, are the very dullest people going, if they ever have an idea in their heads, they save it up carefully for their books."

"What would you have them do with it, Lady Betty? waste it upon you and me? most likely we should not understand it," said the other lady, with her soft little sneer. "Come in, come in, Miss Trevor, and sit and learn at Lady Betty's feet."

Lady Randolph bent towards the speaker with a rapid whisper. "Not a word to Lucy about it, for heaven's sake!" she said.

Mrs. Berry-Montagu made no reply; almost all that could be seen of her was the malicious gleam in her eyes.

"Come and learn wisdom," she said, "at the

feet of Lady Betsinda. When we have a University like the men, there shall be a chair of Social Experience, and she shall be voted into it by acclamation." Lady Betsinda was a little deaf, and rarely caught all that was said, but she made no show of this imperfection, and went on without asking any questions.

"I have met a great many authors in my day," she said, "they used to be more in society in my time. Now it has become a sort of trade, I hear, like cotton-spinning. Oh, yes, cotton-spinners, my dear, get into society—when they are rich enough—and so do the people that write ; but not as they used to do. They are commoner now. It seemed so very clever once to write a book ; now, I hear, it's a great deal more clever not to write. I don't give that as *my* opinion ; ask Cecilia Montagu, it is she who tells me all the new ideas."

"Have I said so ? It is very likely," said that lady, languidly. "It repays one for a great deal of ingratitude on the part of the world, to have a friend who remembers all one says."

"Oh, I have the best of memories," said Lady Betsinda ; "and, as I was saying, if you don't go down on your knees to them they punish you. I was reading somebody's life the other day—I remember her perfectly well, one used to meet her at Lady Cheddar's, and one or two other places—rather pretty and lackadaisical, and very, very civil. Poor thing ! one saw she was there on sufferance ; but if you will believe me—perhaps you have read the book, *Cecilia Montagu*?—you would think she was the centre of everything, and all the rest of us nowhere ! And so poor Lady Cheddar, a really nice woman, will go down to posterity as the friend of Mrs. So-and-so, whom she asked out of charity ! It is enough," said Lady Betsinda, with indignation, "to make one vow one will never read another book as long as one lives."

"Mrs. So-and-so!" said Lady Randolph. "I remember her very well. I think everybody was kind to her. There was some story about her husband, and poor Lady Cheddar took her up and fought all her battles—"

“—And has been rewarded,” said Mrs. Berry-Montagu, softly satirical, “with immortality. Good people, what would you have more? Fifty years hence who will know anything about Lady Cheddar except from the life of Mrs. So-and-so? And so it will be in—another case we know of. After all, you see that, though you make so little account of them, it is the poor authors who hold the keys of fame.”

“As for the other case, that is not a parallel case at all,” Lady Betsinda cried. “Mrs. So-and-so was bad enough, but she did not put poor dear Lady Cheddar in the papers. No, no, she never put her in the papers; and Lady Cheddar was a woman of a certain age, and people did not need to be told what to think about her. These papers are a disgrace, you know; they are dreadful, nobody is safe.”

“But what should we do without them?” said Mrs. Berry-Montagu, lifting up her languishing eyes.

“That’s true enough,” said Lady Betsinda, softening; “one must know what is going on.

But about a young girl, you know ; I really think about a young girl——”

Here Lady Randolph interposed with rapid and alarmed dumb-show, and Sir Thomas made a stride forward, with such a lowering brow as Lucy had never seen before. What could be the matter ? she wondered ; but there the discussion stopped short, and she heard no more.

This was the matter, however : that one of the newspapers of which society is so fond had taken up the romantic dedication of “*Imogen*,” and with an industry that might have been praiseworthy (as the police reports say) if employed in a better cause, had ferreted out a still more romantic edition of the story. It was not true, but what had that mattered ? It gave a fancy sketch of Lucy, and her heiress-ship, and her rusticity, and described how the young novelist was to be rewarded with the hand of the wealthy object of his devotion, a devotion which had begun while she was still poor. Lucy had not learned to care for newspapers, and it was not at all difficult to keep it from her. But Sir

Thomas gave all belonging to him a great deal of trouble to soothe him down, and persuade him that nobody cared for such assaults.

“It is quite good-natured; there is no harm intended,” Lady Randolph said, “we all get a touch now and then.”

“If that is no harm, a punch on the head is still more innocent,” said Sir Thomas, savagely, and it was almost by force, and solely because of the fact that this would be still worse for Lucy, that he was restrained. But Lucy never heard of it, and the article sold off at once, before a month was out, the whole edition of “*Imogen*.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

## GOING HOME.

AND now the period of Lucy's first experiment in life was over. From all the delicacies with which Lady Randolph's care had surrounded her, and from the atmosphere of refinement to which she had grown accustomed, it was now the moment to descend and go back to the homely house which Jock and she instinctively still called "home." He had come in from Hampstead a day or two before, and lived with Lucy in her little sitting-room, while all the packing went on. The limit of the six months had been relaxed a little, to suit Lady Randolph's convenience, who considered (as did

her doctor) that after the fatigues of the season Homburg was a necessity for her. On ordinary occasions Lady Randolph spent a month at the Hall before she went to Homburg ; but she had not thought it prudent this year to take Lucy there, so they had stayed in town till the Parks were like brown paper, and the shutters were up in all the houses. This was a thing that had not happened to Lady Randolph for a long time, and she felt that she was something of a martyr, and that it was for Lucy's sake. However, at last the long days came to an end. Parliament rose, and everybody, to the last lingering official, went out of town. Sir Thomas, who had been at various places in the interval, and whose absence had been a real affliction to Lucy, came back again for a day or two before the final break up. He was not going to Homburg, he was going to Scotland, and it had been arranged that he should act as escort to Lucy on her journey, as Farafield and his own house were on his way to the North. Lady Randolph was not quite sure that she liked this arrange-

ment; the “whole thing,” she said to herself, had gone too far. Tom was not prudent; to show his hand to the rest of the guardians at once, and put them all on their guard, was foolish—and as for waiting seven years! Lucy might do it, Lucy, who, her maternal guardian thought, already showed all the signs of being in love; but Tom! he would have a dozen other serious devotions before that. Sir Tom was fond of Platonic relationships—he did not want to marry, not being able, indeed, to afford that luxury, yet he liked the gentle excitement of a sentimental friendship. He liked, even, to feel himself just going over the edge into love, yet keeping himself from going over. He had kept himself from going over so many times, that he knew exactly what twigs to snatch at, and what eddies to take advantage of; therefore it is not to be supposed that there could be much danger to him from a simple girl. But certainly he had gone further than was at all expedient; Lady Randolph’s very anxiety that this time he should be brought to reason, should not catch at any

twig, but allow himself to be really carried by the current to the legitimate end, made her unwilling to see matters hurried. Lucy would make him a very nice little wife, and, if he married, his aunt knew that he was far too good a fellow not to be a kind husband; but that Lucy's simple attractions (even including her fortune, which was a charm that would never fail) could hold him for seven years, was not a thing to be hoped for. She spoke to Sir Tom very strongly on the subject the evening before they separated. Lucy and little Jock—who always was a troublesome inmate to Lady Randolph because of his very quietness, the trance of reading, in which she never could be sure that he was not listening—had gone upstairs early. London was very warm and dusty in these August days; the windows were open, but the air that came in was not of a very satisfactory description. Most of the houses were shut up round about, and in the comparative quiet the sounds from the Mews behind were frequently audible. In short, there was about the district

the uncomfortable feeling that the appropriate inhabitants had gone, and only a swarm of underground creatures were left, to come forth blinking out of their coverts. Indoors the furniture had all been put into pinaflores, the pretty nothings on the tables had been laid away, the china locked up in cabinets. Lady Randolph was starting by the morning mail-train.

“ You know, Tom,” she said, “ I am not at all sure that it is wise for you to go down with Lucy to-morrow.”

“ Why, aunt? You know it is on my way,” he said with a twinkle in his eye.

“ Oh ! stuff about it being on your way. You know it would not be on your way at all unless you liked to go.”

“ Well !” Sir Thomas said, “ and after——” he never indulged in the vulgarity of French; but he was given to literal translations, which is more aggravating, and neither one thing nor another, as Lady Randolph said.

“ Well! it is just this, most of the guardians live in Farafield, and they will be immediately

put on their guard if they see you much with her. There are the Rushtons, the lawyer-people, and *that* Mrs. Stone, who keeps a school. They will both be in arms against you instantly. That father of Lucy's was an old—— I don't want to be unkind to anybody that is dead and gone, but ——”

“ Most likely he thought it would be better for her not to marry,” said Sir Thomas tranquilly.

“ What folly! well, it would be just like him. I don't think the will would stand if it were ever brought into a court of law. There were the maddest provisos! However, unless it can be broken we must hold by it; and, Tom, you must let me say it, you ought to go more cautiously to work.”

“ Is it worth the trouble?” he said indifferently. “ My dear aunt, before a man takes the pains to work cautiously, he must have set his heart on the prize with some fervour.”

“ And haven't you done so, Tom? Why, I thought you were going too far—and too fast.

I did not see any doubt, or want of warmth, I assure you. Fervour! well, perhaps, fervour is a strong word; that means difficulty to get over, and resistance, and a struggle perhaps. Poor little Lucy! I don't think there will be much resistance on her part."

"I am not at all so sure of that," he said.

"Why, Tom! Poor child! we can't blame her. She is only seventeen; and you have a way—— Ah, my boy, it is not want of experience that will balk you. You have a way of speaking, and a way of looking. And Lucy is as simple as a little dove, there is no concealment about her. She thinks there is nobody like you."

"Well! perhaps you are right. She thinks there is nobody like me," said Sir Tom, with something of that softening of vanity which makes a man's countenance imbecile when he thinks he is admired; "but," he added with a little laugh, "Lucy is no more in love with me than—I am with you. Like her, I think there is nobody like you—"

“ Oh, Tom—Tom, you are a deceiver! My dear, that is nonsense. There is no tie between her and you. The very first night I saw it. Fancy her sitting up to chatter to you—and chattering, she who is so quiet! Why, she is a great deal more open, more at her ease with you than with me.”

“ All so many things against me,” he said, “ she is not in love with me, as I tell you, any more than I am with you.”

Lady Randolph was struck with great surprise, and so many things poured into her mind to be said that she was silent, and did not say anything, looking at him with confused impatience, and able to bring out nothing save a “ but—but,” of bewilderment. At last she enunciated with difficulty and hesitation, “ If this is true, which I can’t believe—do you mind, Tom?”

“ Not much,” he said, then laughed and looked her in the face. “ You do not understand me, aunt. I think it quite likely that if it were put before her as a suitable arrangement, Lucy might make up her mind to marry me. She is

beginning to get perplexed in her life. She has been on the point of confiding in me two or three times."

"What?" said Lady Randolph in great excitement. She could not think of anything but love about which a girl could be confidential, and Bertie Russell, like a Jack-in the-box, suddenly jumped up in her anxious brain. But Sir Thomas shook his head,

"That is exactly what I cannot tell you," he said. "I thought it might be some entanglement with that young fellow of the book; but it is not that. It is quite possible she might marry me—"

"Well, but, Tom—why should you be so very particular? Think what it would be for the estate. You might pay off everything, and regain the first position in the county. You ought to have the first position in the county. What is Lord Langton in comparison with the Randolphs? A nobody; and all this that girl could do. Only think what her fortune could do. I am not mercenary—I don't think I am

mercenary—but when you just realise it. Oh ! how often I have said to myself—Your uncle had no right to marry me. He ought to have married somebody with money. And now if you can set it right, why, oh why ! should you have any absurd scruples ? Of course, Lucy would be very glad ; and she would make you a good little wife. She is not impassioned—she never will be out of her wits about anyone ; if that is what you want, Tom.”

“ No, I don’t think that is what I want,” he said ; “ but in the meantime we need not quarrel about it ; for you know there are the guardians to be taken into consideration, and it would be foolish to show one’s hand. And then there is plenty of time. One ought to go cautiously to work.”

He laughed as he quoted all her own little speeches to her. But for her part, Lady Randolph could have cried—how difficult it is to be patient when you are anxious ! She had been alarmed by what she thought a too hasty progress ; now she was cast down to the depths of

trouble by this sudden suggestion that no progress at all had been made. She did not know what to do. It was no use speaking to Tom, so self-willed was he—always taking his own way. She had no patience with him! *Of course* Lucy liked him—how could she help it? And to think that he would run the risk of losing all that for the merest fantastic nonsense. Oh, she had no patience with him! But when he only laughed and made a joke of it all, what was the use of saying anything? Poor Lady Randolph! She could not let things take their own way. She was unhappy not to be able to guide them, and yet she knew that she could not guide them. Either they would go on too quickly, or they would not go on at all.

The effect of this conversation was, that she started in a much less cheerful and hopeful state of mind for that yearly renovation at Homburg. She tried to make a parting effort for Sir Tom, when she said good-bye to Lucy, who was to leave by a later train. “If Tom stays at the Hall, and there is anything you want advice

about, never hesitate to apply to him, my love," she said, "you may have every confidence in him, as much confidence as in myself."

"Oh yes! Lady Randolph," said Lucy with the warmest sincerity. "I should ask him anything—he has always been so kind to me."

"It is more than kindness—he has a real interest in you, Lucy; and you need never fear to trust Tom. He has a heart of gold, and he is the truest friend in the world," Lady Randolph said. She kissed her charge with fervour. Could she say more? When she turned round, who should be watching her but Tom himself, with that twinkle in his eye. The poor lady felt as if she had been detected. She made her exit quite crestfallen, while Sir Thomas paused to tell Lucy he would come back for her half-an-hour before the train started. "It is not everybody that would make himself a railway porter for your service, is it, Miss Lucy?" he said laughing. "Depend upon it, however specious other people may look, it is 'Codlin's the friend!'" He went out after his aunt still

laughing; but as for Lucy she looked after him somewhat bewildered. Her reading was not her strong point, and she could not think what “Codlin” had to do with it, or who that personage was.

But what a different Lucy it was that took possession of a special carriage reserved for her own party, to Farafield, with her maid and mountain of luggage, from the humble little Lucy, with two black frocks, who had come to town with Lady Randolph in February! Her groom, with her horses and Jock’s pony, had gone the night before; Jock himself, embracing a big book, was the thing of all her surroundings that was the least changed. Lucy’s mind, indeed, was not altered, as were her outward circumstances, but it had expanded and widened, so that she became a little giddy as the journey approached its close, half-pleased, half-alarmed to think of the old life, the familiar streets, the old white parlour with its blue curtains, and the view from the window across the common to Mrs. Stone’s school. Sir Thomas, who had

travelled with her part of the way, now departing to the smoking-carriage, now coming to inquire into her comfort and the progress she was making in the novel with which he had thoughtfully provided her, joined the party at the last important station.

"You have scarcely read twenty pages," he said, reproachfully, "after all my care in choosing you a pretty book. You have read five times as much, Jock."

Jock looked up on being addressed. Though he was many fathoms deep below the surface, he always heard when he was spoken to, and often when he was not spoken to. He was lying across the arm of one seat, with his book lying on the cushions of another, in a dark blue valley below him. He gave a sidelong look of disdain to his questioner.

"Do you count your pages?" said Jock, with contemptuous satire. "I can tell by what the reading is."

"Hush, Jock! I was not reading at all," Lucy said, "but thinking."

"And what might the thinking be? regretting town, or welcoming the country? We'll give her, Jock, two pennies for her thoughts."

"You know," said Lucy, "it is not either town or country I was thinking of. I was thinking of Lady Randolph's, and all that was new to me there; and of some things I have had to do, and how I have lived so different from everything before, and now coming back—home. It always was home, I can't call it anything else; but it will be different again. There is no more papa. . That does not make me unhappy," said Lucy, the tears coming into her eyes, "for it was what he always trained me to expect; but it will be dreary to go into the house and to find that he is not there, sitting by the fire—with the will."

"The will?" Sir Thomas had no fear to be thought inquisitive, his face was full of kindly interest and sympathy.

"Did I never tell you? that was all his thought. It was his amusement, as long—well, as long as Jock could remember. Don't you recollect, Jock, how he would sit and write a

little bit, and rub his hands, and read it to me when I came in. That is how I know so well all he wished me to do. He would put down his newspaper when something occurred to him, and write it down. It pleased him more than anything. Don't you think it is a great pleasure, when anyone is gone, to know exactly what they wished you to do?"

"It is a great bondage sometimes," Sir Thomas said.

"I don't think I shall feel it a bondage. But somehow going back is almost stranger than going away. The rooms at the Terrace will look small; and it will not be prettily furnished, and I shall not have Lady Randolph to talk to, nor the carriage, nor the visitors—"

"These things are easily got, even the visitors. As for Lady Randolph, perhaps you can put up with me instead. I am very fond of being talked to, and you know she recommended me as her substitute."

"That is very true," said Lucy, with her usual calm; "but then you are going to Scot-

land to shoot. You are only here on your way."

"There is no saying, if you consult me a great deal, and give me a great many interesting subjects to think about, how long I may linger on my way."

"Oh, as for that!" said Lucy, "there is one thing—very interesting; but then I am not sure if I should tell it to anyone, though it would be a great, a very great comfort. I tried to tell Lady Randolph once, and ask her—and I have wanted so much to tell you—to ask you—"

"Well! I am a sort of an uncle, you know; that was the relationship we decided upon," Sir Thomas said.

Lucy did not say anything. She laughed, looking at him with a very winning confidence and trust in her eyes. They were quite unabashed in their modest gaze, conscious of no timidity, but there was a gentle affection in them which touched him. However, they were now drawing very near Farafield, and even her composed heart began to beat. She called Jock, very reluctant to be roused from his book, to

look at the church tower, the spire of the town hall, the big roofs of the market. "I don't want to see them," Jock said; all he wanted was his story. Perhaps it was *her* story which made Lucy so animated; one not yet written in any book.

Sir Thomas had intended to take Lucy home, to see her in her old-new habitation, and make himself acquainted with her surroundings; and to this end he had telegraphed to his servants to send a carriage to meet the train. But Sir Thomas had formed no idea in his mind of the real aspect of the other side of Lucy's life; and it had not occurred to him that the people with whom she was going to stay had a right to guide her, equal to that which his aunt exercised. It was a shock to him to see that respectable couple who stood on the very edge of the station waiting for the train, and moved along by its side, panting yet beaming, as it gradually came to a standstill. "Welcome back, my darlings! welcome home, Lucy and Jock," the woman said. She had not the least pretension to the title of

lady. She was enveloped in a large shawl, though it was summer, and she was red and hot. She seized Lucy in her arms, pushing him away as he helped the girl out of the carriage. "Oh, my pet! we have been counting the days, Ford and I; and ain't you thankful to get home after being banished among strangers?" Sir Thomas was confounded. He had thought Lucy was to be pitied for the fantastic arrangement which transferred her from his aunt's house to the care of the old servants, or poor relations, where her position and surroundings would be so different; but the suggestion that she had been banished among strangers took him altogether by surprise. He had been about to take Lucy to the carriage which was waiting; but in a moment she was separated from him, surrounded by these strange people, and drawn in the midst of them towards a fly which was standing near. It was a curious lesson for Sir Tom. He stood aside and looked on while she was taken out of his hands and deposited in the shabbier vehicle, with a sense of the ludicrous which struggled with a

less agreeable feeling. There was another group on the platform to whom Lucy's arrival was very interesting. This was the Rushton family, the lawyer himself, with his wife on his arm, and a tall youth, clad in a light summer suit, with his hands in his pockets, who lounged up and down the railway station after his parents, looking very much out of place, and somewhat ashamed of himself. Mrs. Rushton dashed boldly in, into the midst of the salutations of the Fords. "I must say a word to Lucy," she cried. "We have just come in for a moment to welcome you home. Here is your guardian, Lucy, and Raymond, your old playfellow." It was all that Sir Tom could do not to laugh out. But the laugh was not pleasurable. He thought that anything more artless than this presentation of the old play-fellow at the very earliest moment could not be; but yet what was he himself doing, and what were his inducements to give so much time and attention to this little girl? It was like a scene in the theatre, but so much more dramatic than scenes in the theatre often are.

Lucy, in the midst, so eagerly secured by Mrs. Ford, so effusively embraced by the other lady, the leader of the opposition forces; while old Ford stood jealously on one side, and Mr. Rushton, with his hand held out, looked genial and affectionate on the other. The Fords were gloomy, concentrating their whole attention on the opposing band, whereas the Rushtons, who were the assailants, were directing all their smiles and caresses to Lucy, ignoring her relations. “Ray—Ray—I know you are dying to shake hands with Lucy—come quick and say, how d’ye do. There is no time for any more just now; but I felt I must come just to give you a kiss, and bid you welcome,” said Mrs. Rushton. The lawyer for his part shook a finger at her. “Fine stories Chervil has had to tell about you, my young lady,” he said.

“Lucy,” cried Mrs. Ford in sharp tones, “the fly is waiting, and I am ready to drop. Whoever wishes to see you, can come and see you at the Terrace.”

As for Lucy herself she was so anxious to be

civil to everybody, and so unaccustomed to the conflict that had thus suddenly sprung up around her, that she could not tell what to do. She looked round wistfully towards Sir Tom, who, for his part, stood quite outside the immediate circle round her, smiling to himself with that quick perception of the “fun” of the situation, which was, Lucy thought with vexation, the chief thing he thought of. She felt wounded that he should laugh at her; but then he was always laughing. Little Jock on the other side was a spectator too; but a scene has a very different aspect according as you look upon it from above or from below. Jock was low down among the feet of all these people. Mrs. Rushton nearly brushed him away with her ample gown; Ray all but knocked him down as he came forward sheepishly to shake hands with Lucy. There was something savage in the energy with which little Jock clutched at his sister’s dress. “I say can’t they let us alone? I want to get home—I want to get home,” cried the little fellow. Nobody took the slightest notice of little Jock. Sir Tom,

in the distance, laughed more and more in his moustache, but ruefully. He came forward at last and lifted Jock out from among the other people's legs. "Come and stand here with me, old fellow ; you and I are left out in the cold," said Sir Tom. The tall man and the tiny boy stood out of the crowd, and watched while Lucy was hustled into the fly, Sir Tom laughing, Jock alarmed and gloomy. "She's going away without *me*," Jock said with a naïf consternation. Sir Thomas laughed. "Your day and mine is over, old man," he said.

But Jock at least was not to be forgotten. "Jock, Jock ! where are you ?" Lucy cried anxiously looking out. The child pulled his hand out of Sir Tom's and rushed away ; then the whole party were packed inside the fly, Ford, with his knees up to his chin bolt upright, Mrs. Ford sunk back into a corner, loosening her bonnet strings, and "worrited" beyond all description—while Mrs. Rushton stood kissing her hand on the platform. "If you please, Sir Thomas, what am I to do ?" said a troubled voice

as he looked after them. Then Sir Tom laughed out. It was Lucy's maid, who had been left behind with a number of small matters. He put her into the carriage with secret glee, and sent her off after her mistress. Old Trevor himself could not have made a more grotesque contrast between the old life and the new; how the old man would have chuckled had he seen it! the great heiress shut up in the close fly—the somewhat frightened maid ensconced in the luxurious corner of the open carriage glittering along with a pair of fine horses, and all the prance and dash with which the coachman of a county family thinks it right to maintain the credit of his house in a county town—following the dustiest and stuffiest of flys. This was carrying out his principles on their broadest basis. Sir Thomas chuckled too; it was a piece of malice after his own heart. "If that's so, let's show fight," he said to himself.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE TERRACE.

FOUR persons in a fly on a hot August day, one of them large and warm and "worrited," another very tall, with knees up to his chin, do not make a very agreeable party. Lucy, unaccustomed to travelling, had the whirl of the railway still in her head, and its dust oppressing her lungs and spirits; and she had the sensation of rush, and hurry, and crowding, which was peculiarly disagreeable to her orderly mind, and the uncomfortable consciousness of having abandoned her kind companion without a word. Indeed she seemed suddenly to have ceased to be a free agent. She had lost her independence, and even her per-

sonality, and had been carried off like a bale of goods, like a box long lost and suddenly found again, but no way consulted as to what was to be done with it. Was it this, or was it the mere vulgarity and discomfort of her surroundings that made her heart sick ? The fly had been the only vehicle she had known until six months ago, and the Fords her constant companions, and friendly notice from Mrs. Rushton a thing highly prized and thought of. And she had only been six months away ! But as Lucy drove in at the gloomy gateway of the little enclosure which separated the Terrace from the road, and saw the well-known door open, and looked up wistfully at the well-known windows there was no revulsion of happier feeling. "Here we are at home, Jock," she said faintly, trying to feel as happy as she ought to do. "Is it ?" said Jock indifferently. His little face was blank too ; they had both fallen out of the clouds, down from the heights, and the contact with mother earth was hard. Lucy felt ashamed of herself that this should be, but she could not help it. It was all

so different. Was it possible that the “Aunty Ford” of old was like this? Mrs. Ford was still wearing her mourning. She had crape flowers upon her bonnet, awful counterfeits of nature, corn-flowers with stamens of prickly jet. Her shawl was huddled up about her neck, she had taken off her black gloves, as it was so warm, and her face was of a fine crimson. As for Ford, on the contrary, he was neatness itself. He wore a little checked tie very stiffly starched, and his waist-coat, and the thin legs which were so prominent were of checked black and white in a large pattern. Mourning is not so necessary for a man as for a woman. Mrs. Ford’s crape flowers, with which her bonnet bristled, were intended for the highest respect. Lucy’s depressed sensations were enlivened by a wondering doubt whether she could prevail upon the good woman to abandon these unearthly flowers. Mrs. Ford was talking all the way. “Did you see those Rushtons,” she said, “making a dead set at Lucy the very first moment? one would have thought they would have had more pride; and that Raymond,

that son of theirs ! as if Lucy with the best in London at her feet would look twice at a Raymond? Oh yes, you'll see, they'll be all down upon you like locusts, Lucy ; not a young man in the town that won't be thrown at your head. It is your money they're after—only your money. What is that carriage following behind us ? It is coming here I declare, it's somebody that has got scent of you already—that's what it is to be an heiress ; but it can't be so bad as what you've gone through in London.”

“ It is only Elizabeth,” said Lucy, “ oh, how like Sir Tom, he has put her in the carriage ; Elizabeth —that is my maid. Would you rather I had not brought a maid, Aunt Ford ?”

“ A maid—I never see the use of them. You could have had Jane to help you when you wanted any extra dressing,” said Mrs. Ford with gloom on her countenance, “ what did I tell you, Ford ? I said Lady Randolph would be sending some spy to keep a watch upon us. Do you call that a maid ? sitting up as grand as possible in the carriage, as if she were the lady and you the

servant. It's like Sir Tom, is it? I don't doubt but it's like Sir Tom, *he's* well enough known about here. He's not one you should ever have spoken to, or sat down in the same room with him, if my consent had been asked. Many's the story I could tell about Sir Tom, as you call him; oh, I don't doubt it's quite like him! and many a one he has ruined with his smiling ways."

Jock had not been able so much as to open his book while he rattled along the Farafield streets in the fly, but he had not paid much attention to what was going on; now, however, moved by the practical necessity of getting out of the carriage, he awoke to what was going on around him. He had heard the voice of Mrs. Ford in this same key before. And he looked up suddenly with a surprised but serious countenance.

"Why is Aunty Ford scolding, and us just come? Is it you, or is it me, Lucy?" the little fellow said.

"Me scolding! God forbid," cried the excited woman, and instead of getting out of the fly, she cried, and then in a voice broken with sobs

entreathed their pardon. "It's all my anxiety," she said, "I can't abide that anything but what's good should come to you. I'd like to keep you safe, like the apple of my eye: and that's what Ford thinks too."

This scene was rather an unpleasant beginning to the second chapter of life on which Lucy was now entering. She stood on the pavement before the familiar door, and tried to occupy the attention of Elizabeth, and keep her from observing Mrs. Ford's agitation and tears. Elizabeth was too refined a person to take any notice. She was the very last improvement in the way of a maid, and could have written her mistress's letters had that been desirable, a most useful attendant to ladies "whose education had been neglected." Lady Randolph had not been at all sure of Lucy's grammar, or her h's when she secured such a treasure. But fortunately Elizabeth's superiority went so far as to have convinced her of the inexpediency of taking any notice of her employer's private affairs. She turned her back upon the fly, where Mrs. Ford

was sobbing. She had the air of seeing nothing.

"Sir Thomas made me come in the carriage, Miss Trevor. I could not help it," she said.

"It makes me so happy to see you at home again," Mrs. Ford said, commanding herself. "It is silly, I know, but I can't help crying when I am happy. Come and carry in Miss Lucy's things, Jane. Isn't it a pleasure to see her back again? And now you follow me, my darling, and I'll let you see what we have done for you," she said with some triumph. Lucy went upstairs with a serious face. She thought she knew what she would find there, everything the same, no difference except in one thing, the old man sitting by the chimney corner, with the big blue folios open on the writing table, spreading the *Times* on his knees, rubbing his hands as she came in, looking up at her with his spectacles pushed up on his forehead. He would not be there, but the place would be full of him and of his image. She took Jock's hand into hers, and led him upstairs. It was a pilgrimage upon

which the two orphan children were going. "Come and see where papa used to sit," she said. She had never made great demonstrations of sorrow, but her heart was full of her father, and tears were in her eyes.

Mrs. Ford received them at the door with a look of triumph; but it was with consternation that Lucy saw what had happened. The whole room had been transmogrified. The Fords had given all their minds and a great deal of money, which was of more immediate value, to the great work. Wherever it had been blue, now it was pink. White curtains, very stiff with starch, fluttered at the windows. There was a great deal of gilding about—gilt cornices, gilt chairs, gilt cabinets, and over the mantelpiece an enormous gilt frame enclosing a portrait of old Trevor, which the good people had caused to be painted by a local artist from an old daguerreotype, all with the kind intention of giving pleasure to Lucy. She gave a cry of dismay as she came in. Her father's chair and his writing-table, objects which would have recalled him so much more

tenderly than this portrait, had been carried away. In their place was what the upholsterer called a "lady's chair," covered in one of the newest and most fashionable of cretonnes, stout little cupids disporting themselves on a pink ground—and a gilt and highly decorated work-table. Lucy stood at the door of the room with the checked tears feeling very hot and heavy behind her eyes.

"This is all for you, Lucy," said Mrs. Ford, restored to good humour by the satisfaction with which she regarded her work, "everything in it has been done for you. We have been working at it these three months and more. If you had but heard us talking—'Do you think she would like this? and do you think she'd like that?' and Ford would say, 'I saw a little cabinet in Williams' would just please Lucy,' or 'There's some new curtains at Hemsdon's are the very thing.' We've done nothing else these three months. I declare I don't think I ever slaved so much in my life—to get carpets that matched and a nice chintz, and the rugs and everything. But

we kept the two old white rugs. Mr. Hemsdon said they were beauties. I was determined," said the good woman, "that you should find something just as pretty as your fine London drawing-rooms. 'She shan't come home and find nothing but a dingy old place to sit in, and think my Lady Randolph's is a paradise,' is what I said to Ford, and he backed me up in everything. And now here it is, Lucy my darling, and it's all for you, and I hope you'll be as happy in it as I and Ford wish you to be. I couldn't say more if I were to talk from this to Christmas," Mrs. Ford concluded with a tremulous warmth of enthusiasm which arose partly from the delightful consciousness of giving her charge a pleasant surprise—and partly from a quiver of uncertainty as to whether Lucy's delight would be equal to the occasion. She added instantaneously in a tone which was ready to be defiant, "You may have seen finer in London, I can't say; but this I know, you'll find nothing like it in Farafield, search where you may!"

"Thank you, Aunt Ford," said Lucy faintly.

"It is very pretty—but—I was thinking of papa."

These words checked the rising disappointment and displeasure in the mind of Mrs. Ford, who, if not very refined in her perceptions, was kind, and had a sincere if jealous affection for the girl committed to her care. She took Lucy into her arms and consoled her with much petting and caressing.

"Yes, my pet, I knew you would feel it. Yes, my pretty! Of course it brings it all back. But after the first you'll find the change of the furniture very comforting," Mrs. Ford said.

Lucy did not know what to say when the first pangs of recollection were over. She went round the room and looked at everything, and did her best to praise. Six months ago she would have thought it all beautiful. Even now she had no opinions on the matter, or taste that she was aware of—but she had been six months away in a different atmosphere, and nothing could undo or change that fact. She said everything she could to show her gratitude. Whatever might be said about the curtains or the carpets, the kindness was indisputable; and it was all very pretty,

probably quite as nice as the other way : but it was different. That was all that was to be said — everything was different. She placed herself in the “lady’s chair” which stood in the place of her father’s old seat, and found it very comfortable. It was not comfort that was wanting ; it was—Lucy did not know what ; it was different. Where she sat she could see, through the windows and lines of the curtains, the White House shining in the afternoon sunshine, and the road across the Common, still green with all the freshness of summer. It was very different from the burnt up parks and the rows of London houses, but not in the same way.

“It is all for you, Lucy,” said Mrs. Ford, not quite satisfied with the commendation she had received. “For my part there is nothing I like so well as my own parlour. It may be vulgar, but that’s my taste. I don’t want to be moving about all day long from the drawing-room to the dining-room. I like to feel myself at home. But you are young, and that’s a different thing. You have to do as other people do. There’s one thing,

just one thing I can't give in to : I can't begin at my time of life to be eating my dinner when I should be having my tea ; tea's far more to me than any dinner ; I never was a great eater, and as for wine I can't abide it. A cup of tea and a bit of toast that's what I like. I'll see to your dinner if you wish, like in your poor papa's time ; but I can't change, that's just the one thing I can't do."

"I do not care for dinner," said Lucy, "I will do whatever you do, it does not matter to me."

"If that's so," said Mrs. Ford, brightening ; and she came up to her charge and kissed her affectionately, "whatever we can get or whatever we can do to make you happy, Lucy, you have only to say it, never mind the expense. If there is one thing you have a fancy for more than another, if it should be game, or whatever it is, you shall have it. And this room is yours, my pet. You'll excuse me sitting here, I think there's nothing like my parlour ; but when you want me you can always send for me. And here you shall always find everything kept nice,

and as for a cup of tea whenever you want it—I shouldn't wonder if you were kept very short up there."

Mrs. Ford jerked her thumb over her shoulder by way of indicating Lucy's former abode. "I know what fine ladies are," she said, "a fine outside and not much within. Horses and carriages and all that show, and footmen waiting, and silver dishes on the table—but not much inside."

"Lady Randolph was not like that," Lucy said, faintly. She did not know whether to laugh or to cry; but her companion took her hesitation as a proof of the correctness of her own judgment, and was triumphant.

"I know 'em," she said. "I don't give myself any airs, Lucy, but I know you'll find nothing like that here. No show, but everything good, and plenty of it, and not so much fuss made about you—for we've got no ends to serve, Ford and me—but if there's a thing you want you shall have it; that is our way, and I don't see but what you may be very happy here. Keep all

these folks that will be gathering round you, and making believe to adore you, at a distance, and keep yourself to yourself, and don't put your faith in the Rushtons, nor the Stones, nor any of the Farafielde folks ; and I don't see, Lucy, my pet, but what you may be very happy here. And now, my darling, I'll go downstairs and see after the tea."

Lucy was left alone accordingly, seated in the familiar room, so changed and transformed, and looking out somewhat drearily upon the Common, which had not changed, which she had crossed so often in those old days that were never to come back, that could not come back, neither the simple habits of them, nor the gentle ease of mind and happy ignorance of everything beyond their quiet round. It was not a cheerful programme which her present guardian had traced for her, and Lucy, sitting very still, not caring to move, in the most strangely complete and depressing solitude which she had ever been conscious of, went further in her thoughts than Mrs. Ford. Had it all been a mistake ? Her father's

favourite theory, his pet whim about her, his determination to divide her life between the different worlds of society, one part of it on the higher level, one on the lower, was that to prove itself at once a hopeless blunder? Lucy felt too much dulled and stupefied by the sudden change to be able to think about it; a sensation as of a sudden fall, a precipitate descent down, down, into a world she no longer understood, pervaded her being. Lady Randolph's world had not been a very lofty one; was it possible that it was the mere external change from one kind of house to another, from a companion who dressed with exquisite taste to one who huddled on her common clothes anyhow, and wore crape flowers in her bonnet; from old, soft, mossy Turkey carpets to brilliant modern Brussels, that gave her this sensation of downfall? Lucy did not ask herself the question, nor did it even suggest itself in any formal way to her mind, only a vague sense of the impossibility of the return, the radical change in all things, the space she had traversed which could not be gone back, overwhelmed her

vaguely. If it had been a poor country cottage, a rustic farmhouse, real poverty to contrast with the soft surroundings of wealth, the contrast might have been salutary, and it might have been natural. But the Terrace was nothing but a vulgar, unintelligent copy of the house she had come from ; the life set before her now was but a poor imitation of that she had left, but narrowed, and limited, and shut in, cut off by jealous precautions from all the human fellowship that made the other attractive. Ford and his wife, in their little stuffy parlour, at their tea-table, eating their toast and their shrimps, were as respectable in themselves as Lady Randolph at the head of the pretty table covered with flowers, softly lighted, and noiselessly served. Probably they were more honest, more strictly sincere, than she, and their love for Lucy was a very genuine love, more profound than her easy affection. But how was it ? Lucy could not tell—to step down all in a moment from Lady Randolph to the Fords was something incomprehensible and impossible. She could not go back these six

months ; the new life had claimed her, she was not capable of resuming the old where she had left it off. This feeling humiliated and depressed her, she could not tell how or why. Had they been living in a little cottage in the country, had they been quite poor, so that she should have had homely services to do for them, help to give, that would have been practicable ; but to come back to the Terrace with her maid, and her horse, and her groom, and her new habits : to have all the indulgences without any of the graces of existence ! Lucy sat sadly in the pink room, all newly bedizened and fine, dressed out by ignorance and kindness for her pleasure, but not pleasing her at all, and pondered, dreary and down-hearted. Was it possible that papa himself had not understood ? that he did not know what the real differences were, but had made to himself some picture of extravagant splendour on the one side, to be tempered by the Fords and their respectable parlour on the other. Alas ! Lucy felt more and more, as she reflected, that poor papa did not understand. It made her heart

sore to sit in the place where he had sat, and to contemplate this, and to feel that perhaps, as Sir Thomas had said, to follow out all those regulations of his, which she had thought a happiness and consolation, might turn out nothing less than a bondage. Everything seemed somewhat blank before her, as she sat thus solitary. She knew the routine so well, there was no margin of the unexpected, no novelty to carry her on. She had been so deep in thought that she had not felt a pull at her dress several times repeated. At last Jock could have patience no longer.

“I say,” he cried, looking up from his old position upon the great white rug, “Lucy, it is not any good to think.”

Lucy was not greatly given to that exercise of thinking, and, to tell the truth, she had not found it to be of very much use.

“What makes you say so, Jock?”

“Oh, because I have tried—often,” said the little fellow; “before we went away from here, and after, when I went to school. It is no good,

you never find out anything ; you wonder and wonder, but you never know any better. Do you think, now," said Jock, with a gleam of moisture in his eyes, " that *he* ever sees us now, or hears what we are talking about ? I wonder —often——"

" I—hope so, Jock," said Lucy ; but as she remembered what she had just been thinking she faltered a little, and was not so sure that this was desirable, as in the abstract it seemed to be.

" I wonder," said the little boy—thoughts such as had filled her mind had perhaps been vaguely floating across his firmament also. " I wonder—He would miss his funny old table and his big blue paper if he were to come back now."

" He has now something better : we will not think of that any longer," said Lucy, drying her wet eyes.

" But we have got to think of it," said Jock, reflectively contradicting himself, " that is funny, everything is funny ; there is Aunty Ford at the foot of the stairs calling us to go down to tea."

## CHAPTER XX.

## HOME AND FRIENDS.

THAT very evening, notwithstanding her supposed fatigue, the little world of Farafeld was roused to welcome Lucy. The Rector and his wife, going out for a drive in the cool of the evening, drew up their pony at the door, and left a card and their kind regards, and hoped Miss Trevor was not tired with her journey; and a little later, when Lucy and Jock were preparing to stroll out, as they had been in the habit of doing, upon the Common, they were stopped by a visit from Mrs. Rushton and her son and daughter. "We always come out after dinner in the hot weather," the visitor explained,

"and it is so delightful to have an object for our walk. I hope you have had a good rest, my dear. What a pleasure," said Mrs. Rushton taking Lucy's hands in hers, and looking at her with enthusiasm, "to see you at home again, and looking so well!"

Lucy was confused by the warmth and *effusion* of this unexpected greeting. Her guardian's wife had never taken much notice of her in the old days; but she was pleased at the same time, for affection is always pleasant, and it was agreeable to find that she had more friends than she was aware of. Raymond, of whom she remembered nothing, except that she had seen him at the railway station, was an ordinary young man, still in his morning suit, by licence of the summer, and the after dinner walk; and wholly undistinguishable from any other young man in that universal garb. He said, "How d'ye do?" and taking his right hand out of his pocket, presented it to her, not without embarrassment. Lucy gave it him back at once, with a great inclination to laugh. She felt herself a great

deal older, and more experienced than Raymond, though he was two and twenty and had taken his degree.

"I hope you will not find Farafield dull," said Mrs. Rushton, "we must do what we can to make you like us, Lucy. Have you seen a good deal of society in town? Oh! I know you could not go out; but Lady Randolph is always having company. I suppose you would meet her nephew, Sir Thomas. I hear he is expected at the Hall."

"Yes," said Lucy. "He is on his way to Scotland. He came down here with us to-day."

"Oh! he is on his way to Scotland? Isn't this a little out of the way to Scotland, Ray? I know when *we* went, we had to go a hundred miles round, your father said, to get to that big junction; but you can't always calculate on Sir Thomas. He is a gay deceiver; with that jolly laugh of his, didn't you quite fall in love with him, Lucy? I always say he is the most dangerous man I know."

"I liked him very much," Lucy said.

“ And so does Ray. He is quite captivating to young people. He has always been so kind to Ray. One forgets the little stories that are current about him when one comes under the spell. Did you like his aunt equally well, Lucy ? Opinions are divided on that score.”

“ She was very kind to me,” said Lucy, “ no one ever took so much care of me. She did not talk of it, but one felt all round one—”

“ But still you did not care for her ? That is what I have always heard—very kind, and that sort of thing ; but not attractive.”

“ Indeed, I am very fond of Lady Randolph,” Lucy said, with a flush of annoyance. Her visitor laughed and coughed, confused and disconcerted, though Lucy could not tell why.

“ Oh ! I only say what I have heard !” she said. “ I don’t know much of her myself. Sir Thomas is the only member of the family whom I know ; and I always frankly admit I think him charming—whatever may be his little faults.”

All this time Raymond stood swaying about

from one leg to another, with his hands in his pockets. He had received the best of educations, as his mother proudly declared ; but this had not conferred ease of manner or social grace. Lucy could not help longing that he would sit down ; but it seemed to be against the young man's principles. He stood between her and the window, swaying about like a cloud upon the wind, but solid enough to shut out the light. Miss Rushton was a very big girl of sixteen in short frocks, who kept half behind her mother, and took shelter under her wing.

“ And what are you going to do, my dear, now you have come back ? I hope we shall see a great deal of you. You will find yourself a little lost here just for the first. The Fords are excellent people, but you will find yourself a little lost. You must run over to us whenever you feel dull. To-morrow there is some croquet going on—are you fond of croquet ? You must come early and have a game, and stay to dinner. In this hot weather we never dress for dinner, for we always have a walk in the cool of the

evening. Is that a bargain ?" said Mrs. Rushton graciously. " And you must bring little Jock. Do you walk with him as you used to do, Lucy ? I think, as a girl, you were the very best sister in the world."

" Jock and I ride," said Lucy, " he was always fond of riding. Lady Randolph sent the horses and the groom, and Jock's pony. She thought I might have them here."

" Certainly, Lucy," Mrs. Rushton said with many nods of her head. " That I am sure your guardians would approve. And what a lucky thing for you, Ray ! Now you can get up all sorts of delightful parties. Emmy is beginning to ride very nicely too, and you like it, don't you, dear ? They will be so glad to join. I am *so* delighted to have found something in which you can all join."

" It will be very jolly," said Raymond. That and " How d'ye do ?" was all that he contributed to the conversation, And Emmy said nothing at all, except in shy murmurs of assent, and stifled explosions of laughter when her mother

said anything she thought amusing. The two young people preceded Mrs. Rushton downstairs when she had said all she had to say; but she came back again, once more seized Lucy's two hands, and added a parting word in her ear.

"I see that friend of yours, that Mrs. Stone, coming this way. She is very well in her own place, Lucy; oh, very nice. I thought she behaved badly to me about Emmy; but that is neither here nor there. Everybody speaks very highly of her—in her own place. But you must not let her get you into her hands, dear. She is dreadfully managing, and by hook or by crook she will have her own way. But you are in a different sphere altogether. Don't forget, my dear Lucy, that you are in a different sphere. I felt that I must just say this. You know what an interest I take in you. Dear child!" said Mrs. Rushton with enthusiasm, giving Lucy a sudden and tender kiss of irrestrainable feeling. "Who would not take an interest in you, so young and so nice and so lonely? Till to-morrow, dear!—"

Mrs. Stone met Mrs. Rushton going down. “So it is true that Lucy has come back,” said that able tactician. “I heard a rumour and was coming to inquire—when they told me she was here.”

“Just come. My husband being her guardian, I felt that she had a special claim upon me, poor dear child. I am afraid she is tired with her journey, and agitated with all the associations. I have only been there a moment, I would not stay. I felt it was kindness to postpone a longer visit.”

“Thank you for the hint,” said Mrs. Stone, calmly pursuing her way upstairs; and she too took Lucy into her arms, if not with enthusiasm, yet with the most affectionate interest; she kissed her, and then held her at arm’s length, and looked into her face. “You are very welcome back, my dear,” she said, “but, Lucy, there is something new in your face.”

“Is there?” said Lucy faintly, “I am a little tired; and then there are so many other things that are new.”

Mrs. Stone looked round the room, with such disdain of the shop-upholstery as was natural to a woman who possessed a parlour furnished with Chippendales. She said, "Ah, I see they have been doing something here," then added, "Lucy, you must not trifle with me, it is not that. But," she said, "your hat is on the table, you were going out? it is a sweet evening, and we can talk just as well on the Common. Come, and we will discuss the whole matter out of doors."

Lucy was grateful to be released, for the night was warm, and Jane, Mrs. Ford's maid, had come up with a taper in her hand, and was threatening to light the gas. Mrs. Ford was determined that Lucy should want for nothing, and no consideration of time or season was permitted to interfere with the proper hours for doing everything in this well regulated house. Therefore, though it was somewhat late for Jock, Lucy put on her hat gratefully, and suffered her hand to be drawn through the arm of her considerate friend, and drew a long and grateful

breath as she got out upon the breezy sweep of the Common, which even in the twilight showed a faint flush of the heather. “How sweet it is! this is the one thing which is unchanged,” she said.

“Do you find the place changed, Lucy?”

“Perhaps it is me, Mrs. Stone.”

“You should say I, my love. Yes, no doubt it is you, Lucy. It could not be otherwise; you have been in so different a sphere, and how could you help feeling it? I think I can understand you. Lady Randolph is—well, I don’t know what she is. I confess that I have a little prejudice against her.”

“Indeed, you should not have any prejudice,” said Lucy earnestly, “she is so good and so kind—oh, far too kind and good for anything I deserve.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Stone with a smile, “I understand: a woman with a great deal of tact, Lucy, who knows what is best for you, and takes her measures accordingly; oh yes, I am quite sure Lady Randolph is highly refined, and a thorough

lady, and would do nothing that was unbecoming, whereas our good Mrs. Ford is just—Mrs Ford, and a very good woman. I think it would have been better, Lucy—we have all our little vanities—if your excellent father had sent you to me."

"Yes," said Lucy with a sigh: but there was no enthusiasm in the assent. Mrs. Stone was slightly disappointed. She gave the girl's arm a soft pressure.

"You must let us help you to get through this second beginning: things will never be so bad again. You will get used to the alteration, and new interests will spring up. What are you doing about little Jock, my dear?"

"Nothing," said Lucy, "he is still so little, and I have no one else. Do you think, really, really I ought to send him, such a little fellow, away from me to some *real* school. He was at Mrs. Russell's, but that was not a real school, and I went to see him whenever I liked."

"Ah! perhaps too often," said Mrs. Stone, with another pressure of her young friend's arm. "I have something to say about that after. But,

Lucy, listen. I will tell you what I was thinking. Frank St. Clair, whom you may remember, my nephew, is coming to stay with me again. He is not very well, poor fellow. I will tell you his story some time. He has been unfortunate."

"He who was so kind, who came to see papa?"

"Your father interested him so much, dear! He used to come back and tell me all the clever acute things he said. Yes. Frank St. Clair. This is one of my disappointments, Lucy. Frank was the pride of all our family. We all seemed to have a share in him; his father died young, his mother was poor, and we all helped. He was the cleverest boy I ever saw. At school he was *extraordinary*, no one could stand against him, and you can imagine how proud we all were. Am I boring you with my story, Lucy?"

"How could you think so? I am like Jock about a story, there is nothing I like so much: especially if at the end there was anything—anything that could be done."

"I don't know what you could do, my dear," Mrs. Stone said with a smile, "but your sympathy is

sweet. He was not quite so successful at the University, there is such competition—but still he did very well, and also in his work at the bar. For he is a barrister," said Mrs. Stone with a thrill of pride in her voice, "he has been called, and was just at the beginning of his career—when his health failed. Can you imagine such a disappointment, such a commentary upon the vicissitudes of life! Just when he was in a position to justify all our hopes, his health gave way."

"I am so sorry." Lucy looked up at her friend with the profoundest pity in her blue eyes, but with something else besides, a spark of hidden interest, the gleam with which an explorer's eyes shine when he finds some new sphere of discovery, a new world to conquer. Lucy had not been very happy in her first venture, but she jumped at the thought of a second venture, if it might be found practicable. It was she now who pressed Mrs. Stone's arm, clinging closely to it. "I am so sorry! I hope he may soon get better. Is there nothing that could be done?"

“Rest is all he wants, my dear, rest and a relief from anxiety, and something to do quietly that will not strain him. As soon as I knew you were coming back, I immediately thought of Jock. Poor Frank is very independent, he would be less unhappy if he had something to do. And it is providential for you, for Jock must begin to have something done for his education ; I consider it quite providential for you.”

“If Mr. St. Clair would be so kind. But—would he like it, a gentleman, and a lawyer, and so clever,” said Lucy, puzzled. “Jock is such a little, little fellow.”

“He will take Jock,” said Mrs. Stone, with tranquil assurance. “He would not take any little boy, of course, but Jock is exceptional, Jock is your brother, and you know my interest in you, Lucy. Yes, my dear, do not be afraid, Frank will take Jock. And now that this is settled—and I wanted to make your mind easy on the subject—let us talk of other things. What is all this story about the Russells, Lucy ? You have not allowed Bertie to—he has not, I

hope, really acquired any—— It is so difficult to speak to you on such a subject, but you know I am a kind of guardian too. I should not approve of Bertie Russell, I could never give my consent——”

“ To what ? ” said Lucy, with great surprise. “ Is it about his book, Mrs. Stone ? It was not my fault, indeed, it was not anyone’s fault. I suppose he never thought that people would take any notice. It was just a mistake, a foolish thing to do. I think even Lady Randolph, though she was so angry, got to see that at last.” .

“ Then there is nothing more, Lucy ; you can assure me, on your word, that there is nothing more ? ”

Lucy was more surprised than ever.

“ What should there be more ? ” she said.

Mrs. Stone laughed and made no reply.

“ So Lady Randolph was angry,” she said. “ I don’t wonder, so was I. We all have the same feeling towards you, Lucy,” and here Mrs. Stone laughed again, evidently perceiving a

humorous aspect of the question which was unknown to Lucy. “We are all so—fond of you, my dear. Did you see much of the Randolph family when you were there ?”

“ Only Sir Tom.”

“ Only Sir Tom ! that makes you smile. By the way, he *is* all the Randolph family, I believe ; and he is *nice*, Lucy ? I have met him, and I thought him very pleasant ; but he has not a very good character, I am afraid. He has been what people call wild ; but now that he is getting old, no doubt he is mending his ways.”

Mrs. Stone gave Lucy a keen glance of inquiry as she said this ; but, as a matter of fact, Lucy at eighteen honestly thought Sir Thomas old, and made no protest, which satisfied her friend. She said, after a pause,

“ Now, I have a pleasant surprise to give you. Katie Russell is here ; I am looking for a situation for her. She has finished her education, and I wish to place her in a thoroughly nice family.”

"Oh!" cried Lucy, with pained surprise. "I thought that Mrs. Russell—I thought that *now* they were all to be at home."

"Since she came into that money? Oh, no, it is not enough for that; besides, even if it were more than it is, Katie ought to do something, to make a life for herself. It was a great God-send, the money, but it is not enough for any great change in their life."

"I thought—it was enough to live on," said Lucy, feeling a great flush of shame come over her face. It had not given her much satisfaction in any way, but to hear that it was a failure altogether struck her a very keen and unexpected blow.

"Oh, no, my dear, no," said Mrs. Stone, all unaware of Lucy's interest in the matter, "a pittance! merely enough to give them a little more comfort, joined to what they have."

Lucy went home rather subdued after this interview. She did not see Katie, who was out with Miss Southwood, and she was rather glad to escape that meeting. She called Jock back

from his wanderings among the heather, and led him home, with his little arms twined round hers. Lucy felt very much subdued, perhaps because she was tired. She drew little Jock very close to her, and felt something like the twilight dimness stealing into her mind.

"Are you tired?" she said; "you ought to be in bed. I think I am tired too; Jock, are you glad to be at home?"

"I don't know if it's home," said Jock, looking up at her with his big eyes.

"Neither do I," said Lucy, drearily. "But it is all we have for home," she added, with a sigh. "Anyhow, it is you and me, Jock; things cannot be so very bad as long so there is you and me."

To this Jock assented with a reservation.

"I suppose I shall have to go to school, Lucy; all the other fellows go to school."

"I have got a tutor for you, dear: you will not have to go away. Mr. St. Clair, that used to come and see papa. It is providential, Mrs. Stone says."

"What, that fat fellow in the black coat? I don't mind," said Jock. "I think he is a duffer, he's so fat; but I don't mind. You don't know what that means, Lucy."

"You should not say such naughty words, that is what you learnt at school;" said Lucy, with disapproval. "I don't think you learned anything else there."

"Duffer is not a naughty word, it means just nothing; but I don't mind him at all," said Jock, with indulgence. He was quite willing to undergo the experiment. "I should like to have another try," he said.

When they got to the house it was as dark as an August evening ever is, and Mrs. Ford, with a candle in her hand, was beginning to fasten up the windows and doors. She had again put on her stern aspect, and looked very severe and solemn, as she followed them upstairs. "It is a great deal too late for that child," she said. "He ought to have been in bed an hour ago. So you have had visitors, Lucy? I think they might have been so civil as to ask for me. After all,

though the house may be kept for your convenience, it's me that am the mistress of it. And I expect civility, if there's nothing more to be looked for. I do expect that."

"I am very sorry, Aunt Ford."

"You must be something more than sorry. You must let them see you won't stand it. As for that Mrs. Rushton, I think she is insufferable. She wants to keep you in her set. And Raymond, what does he want here the first evening? *You* never knew Ray Rushton; whatever they may say, don't you put any faith in them, Lucy. She's a designing woman; and I mistrust her, bringing her son the first day."

"You tell me to put no faith in Mrs. Rushton, and she tells me to beware of Mrs. Stone, and they both shake their heads about Lady Randolph," said Lucy with a smile, that was not happy. "If I am to do what you all tell me, don't you think, Aunt Ford, I shall be very lonely? for these are all the friends I have."

"My pet," said Mrs. Ford; "don't you be afraid, you'll get friends in plenty, friends always turn up for a girl who is— a good girl," she added, after a momentary pause. Perhaps she had not intended originally to conclude her sentence in this simple and highly moral way.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.













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